

Philippians

Lesson #8, Chapter 2:12-18

May the Lord grant you much grace as you dive into His Word in this lesson. Ask the Lord to help you see areas to improve in and a heart willing to do it *for His sake*.

1. Paul continues expounding on his theme begun in Philippians 1:27, that the Philippians would *conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ*. Summarize what conducting ourselves in a worthy manner looks like from Philippians 2:1-11.

2. Paul's *so then* (ESV, NKJV, NIV *therefore*) at the beginning of Philippians 2:12 indicates he fully intends to continue his discussion of how the Philippians can live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. What command is given in verse 12?
 - a. How does verse 12 connect to Paul's comments in the previous verses?

 - b. What other observations can you make about verse 12?

3. Notice how the following Scriptures essentially say, "Work out your salvation." See Romans 6:8-13; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Corinthians 6:1; 7:1. After reviewing those Scriptures, consider our passage, and explain what Paul means when he says *work out your salvation*.

The words “work out” are the translation of a Greek word which means “to carry out to the goal, to carry to its ultimate conclusion.” We say, “The student worked out a problem in arithmetic.” That is, he carried the problem to its ultimate conclusion. This is the way it is used here. The Philippians are exhorted to carry their salvation to its ultimate conclusion, namely, Christlikeness. The salvation spoken of here is not justification, but sanctification, victory over sin and the living of a life pleasing to the Lord Jesus. They are to see to it that they make progress in their Christian lives. ~Kenneth Wuest¹

Believe as if you had no power. Work as if you had no God. ~Marvin Vincent²

4. We’re told to work out our salvation with *fear* and *trembling*. What does Paul want us to understand about how we are to live before the Lord? See 2 Corinthians 7:15; Hebrews 12:28-29. Please comment on how verse 13 guides the kind of “fear and trembling” we’re to have.

5. The nitty gritty of *how* to apply verse 12 in our lives and what it may look like can sometimes feel a bit nebulous, which is why it’s so comforting to read verse 13. What do we learn in verse 13? Explain how the encouraging truths in verse 13 help us obey the command of verse 12.

"A clipper ship crossing the Banks of Newfoundland in heavy weather strikes an iceberg. She settles rapidly at the bow, and her captain and crew have barely time to leap into the lifeboat. The question, "What must we do to be saved?" is answered by their prompt leap into the lifeboat, which is an act of faith. They trust their lives to it for salvation. From immediate death they are saved.

But, after the ship has sunk, the crew are still out in the deep and dangerous sea. There is a second process necessary. In order to keep out of the trough of the sea and to reach the distant shore, they must stick to the boat and pull lustily at the oars. They must "work out their salvation" now by hard rowing. But this is a continued process of salvation day after day until they reach the shores of Nova Scotia. Never for a moment, however, are they independent of the lifeboat. That must keep them afloat, or they go to the bottom. At last, after hard rowing, they reach the welcome shore. This is their third, final, and complete salvation, for they are entirely beyond any perils of the treacherous sea. Now they are at rest, for they have reached the desired haven." ~Theodore Cuyler³

¹ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 73–74.

² Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 437.

³ Theodore Cuyler, *God's Light on Dark Clouds*, page 65.

6. In Philippians 2:14 we're given a very practical way to work out our salvation. What is it? How would obeying this one command be an effective way to walk in a worthy manner before the Lord?

7. Define *grumbling* [Strong's #1112 (NKJV, NIV *complaining*)]. Look up the following verses to see how that same Greek word is used other places. See John 7:12; Acts 6:1; 1 Peter 4:9. What do you learn from those verses about the word?

8. Define *disputing* [Strong's #1261 (NIV *arguing*)]. What else can you learn about arguing and disputing from Luke 9:46; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 3:3-5; 1 Timothy 6:3-5?

9. Instead of disputing, what does the Word of God counsel us to do when we have a difference of opinion? See Romans 12:18; 1 Corinthians 1:10-12; Galatians 5:26; 1 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 12:14; James 3:14-18.

10. We're commanded in Philippians 2:14 to "do all things without grumbling or disputing." What kinds of things might we be tempted to complain or argue about when we, like the Philippians, encounter suffering, hardship, and persecution?

11. The word "prove" from verse 15 means to "show yourself to be" or "may become." The phrasing indicates we are to become or are in the process of becoming something we are not now. If we refrain from grumbling and disputing, what is the result in our lives according to verse 15?

12. Thankfully, the words “blameless” and “above reproach” used in verse 15 don’t mean sinless perfection. (Incidentally, they are variations of the same Greek word.) The words do mean, however, that we live in such a way that unbelievers cannot “rightfully” point a finger at us. Wow! What an amazing testimony! If we want to live without shame or guilt in the midst of world looking for a way to accuse us, then what do we need to do? See Philippians 2:14.

13. Why would implementing this one command have such a far-reaching effect in our lives and to the world around us?

14. Philippians 2:16 begins with “holding fast the word of life.” A better rendering, and one that fits the context better, translates this section as “holding forth” the word of life. The NIV did a good job with the text, saying you will shine like stars in the universe as you “hold out the word of life” to unbelievers. Based on that reading, and according to the near preceding context, what powerfully puts God and His transforming power on display? See verse 14.

15. There’s no getting around it in this text—if we want to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ and put feet to our salvation, then we cannot grumble or complain, especially when we’re under pressure. What does it say about us and our God if we do resort to grumbling and arguing among ourselves?

“Paul is not saying that they would become children of God by avoiding complaining and disputing. They were already children of God. His point is rather that they would become known as children of God by avoiding these things. Certain things are simply out of keeping with the Christian faith, and when unbelievers see these things in us, they are quick to conclude that there is nothing to our Christianity. Complaining and grumbling are certainly among those things.

Christians believe that God is sovereign over all things, including even those circumstances that they find unpleasant and undesirable. When we complain and grumble, we are telling those around us that we believe God is doing a very poor job, and, if given the opportunity, we could do much better.

We can go a long way towards conquering grumbling and complaining by keeping constantly in mind the world in which we live, and our responsibility in it. This world is a dark place—it is both ‘crooked’ and ‘perverse’ (v. 15). This world is not as God made it. It has been warped and twisted by sin, but God’s people are not like the world. We are those in whom the darkness has been dispelled by the light of the gospel, and we are now to ‘shine as lights in the world’ (v. 15).” ~Roger Ellsworth⁴

16. Besides becoming a shining testimony of God’s redeeming grace by not grumbling or arguing, what is another reason Paul desires the Philippians to live well? See Philippians 2:16.

17. Look up the following verses and explain what you learn about Paul and his stewardship of the time, gifts, and ministry God had given him. See 1 Corinthians 9:27; Galatians 2:2; 4:11; 1 Thessalonians 3:5.

18. No one wants to waste their time or efforts on things that won’t bear fruit—and neither did Paul. It’s obvious from the verses above (and more we didn’t look at) that Paul wanted his labors for the Lord to bear fruit. Yet, it’s important to examine *why* Paul wanted to work so faithfully. What is it that motivates his faithfulness and makes him long to see fruit in his ministry? See 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Philippians 1:18, 20, 21; 3:14.
 - a. How does living with such a clear sense of purpose and goals make life simpler?

⁴Roger Ellsworth, [*Opening up Philippians*](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004), 44–46.

19. Even if we don't understand all the "offering" references Paul uses in Philippians 2:17, we still get a sense of what he wants to communicate to the Philippians. What does he want them to know in verse 17?
20. Define *poured out* [Strong's #4689]. Round out the word's meaning and how Paul is using it in Philippians 2:17 by looking up the following verses where he employs the same word or speaks in a similar way: Acts 20:24; 2 Corinthians 12:15; Philippians 1:20; 1 Thessalonians 2:8; 2 Timothy 4:6.
- a. Based on what you've just learned, please explain what Paul is communicating in Philippians 2:17.
21. What does Paul hope to receive from the Philippians in 2:18?
- a. Rather than a vague, general kind of joy, Paul has something specific in mind. What kind of joy does he desire to see in the Philippians? See Romans 5:1-2; 15:13; Philippians 1:25.
- b. How would this kind of joy be a blessing to all?
22. What things stood out to you in this lesson that you'd like to continue to think on and live out?

What various hindrances we meet
In coming to a mercy seat?
Yet who that knows the worth of prayer,
But wishes to be often there.

Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw,
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above.

Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian's armor bright;
And Satan trembles, when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

While Moses stood with arms spread wide,
Success was found on Israel's side;
But when thro' weariness they failed,
That moment Amalek prevailed.

Have you no words? Ah, think again,
Words flow apace when you complain;
And fill your fellow creature's ear
With the sad tale of all your care.

Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To Heav'n in supplication sent;
Your cheerful song would oftener be,
Hear what the Lord has done for me!

~William Cowper⁵

⁵ William Cowper, "What Various Hindrances We Meet," <http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/w/v/h/vvhwmeet.htm>