How to “Work out Your Salvation”

Philippians 2:14-18

Introduction:

Just as God does not call us without enabling us, so also, He does not tell us what to do without telling us how to do it. In verse 12 and 13 He told us to “work out our salvation” (sanctification).

The word “salvation, (σωτηρίαν)” means “deliverance”. Context has to tell us deliverance “from what”

Spiritual Salvation has three tenses,

* Past Salvation - from the penalty of sin. (Justification)

“By Grace you have been saved through faith.” (Eph. 2:8)

* Future Salvation-from the presence of sin. (Glorification)

“our salvation nearer than when we first believed.” (Rom. 13:11)

* Present Salvation – from the power of sin (Sanctification)

Paul is speaking in this passage not about the Past or the future, but about the present salvation from the power of sin. All believers are called on to live out the salvation God has worked in them—to progress in their spiritual maturity.

In verse 14-18 He tells us how we are to do it. He assumes (it would seem) a worst case scenario. And that is good because that is where we find ourselves in these days.

Do you live or work in a dark place? Maybe in a home where you are the only Christian in a job where you and your Christian-life face: indifference, contempt, or even opposition to Jesus and the Bible.

There are reasons why you are there:

1. God can trust you to be a witness there. He can’t trust just anybody with that mission.

2. Lights shine brighter in a dark place.

In order to enable us to work out our salvation, God needs to change us into the image of Christ.

He starts in the inward parts.

I. Changing Us Inwardly – 2:14-16

1. A Christ-like Disposition – 2:14

“Do all things ﻿﻿without ﻿﻿murmuring and ﻿﻿arguing,”

The first word in verse 14 is “all”. That is the most important word.

All means all and that’s all “all” means.

The second word is “do.” God doesn’t do anything in your place. In salvation, He did it all, you simply accepted the gift. In sanctification and discipleship you do it. He helps you. It’s your life, live it!

1. Do it Without Murmuring

The English word “Murmur” is an [onomatopoetic](http://www.google.com/search?rlz=1T4SKPB_enUS382US403&q=onomatopoeic&spell=1&sa=X&ei=7kxxUY6IEYH69QSD0oDwBA&ved=0CC4QBSgA) word. The pronunciation sounds like the action it describes. When you have pronounced it, you have done it. When you say “murmur,” you have just “murmured”.

In I Corinthians 10, Paul says, …let us {not} ﻿﻿tempt Christ, as ﻿﻿some of them also tempted, and ﻿﻿were destroyed by serpents; ﻿nor murmur, as ﻿﻿some of them also murmured, and ﻿﻿were destroyed by ﻿﻿the destroyer. (From Numbers 21)

2. Do it Without Arguing

This word can mean simply “discussion”. But he wouldn’t say, “have no discussions”

It was used in Luke 9:46,

“Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest.”

The meaning here is “argument”. The idea seems to be, murmuring and arguing about where we have to work, getting out the light of the Gospel.

Suppose a lighthouse could reason to itself thus: “Why do I have to work out here in the dark?” But that is the place where the light is needed.

Just so, we are working among sinful, evil, needy people. They are the ones that need the Gospel Message. The purpose/result of “not murmuring and arguing” is “that we may become like Christ.”

If an unbeliever comes into a group of believers who are murmuring and complaining, he is not likely to stay very long.

B. A Christ-like Declaration – 2:15-16

1. The Truth Seen – 2:15

a. Their Attitude. ﻿

“that you may become blameless and ﻿﻿harmless, children of God without fault”

1. Blameless - “above reproach”

It does not mean “sinless perfection”. This has to do with our actions toward others. It refers to our reputation among those in the world. Jesus said,

“Which one of you convicts Me of sin.” No one could. (John 8:46)

1. Harmless - pure or innocent in our corporate testimony.

“Harmless” is a word that is used of wine that has not been diluted, or metal which has not been weakened.

So, that would mean that we should have a testimony that does not have any admixture of “murmuring” or complaining. Jesus told His disciples to be: “wise as serpents and ﻿﻿harmless ﻿﻿as doves.” (Matt.10:16)

1. Faultless - unblemished

It is used in the O.T. to describe an animal fit to be a sacrifice.

That fits well with Romans 12:1

“I beseech you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your ﻿﻿reasonable service.”

b. Their Audience - “a crooked and perverse generation,”

“Crooked” - crooked or bending. Cf. scoliosis – curvature of the spine.

“Perverse” - depraved

It seems that Paul had the unbelieving Israelites in mind. Moses had used similar words to describe Israel who had gone astray (cf. Deut. 32:5). Peter called them “corrupt generation,” (Acts 2:40) Jesus used the same word “perverse generation,” (Matt. 17:17) that word describes our generation as well.

c. Their Action - “among whom you shine as ﻿﻿lights in the world”

Believers shine, but not by themselves. They are like the moon. They reflect the light of the Son.

2. The Truth Spoken – 2:16

a. The Reaching Out - “holding fast the word of life”

Paul encouraged them to reach out to their mission field. Your example is important; but your example cannot save anyone. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. (Romans 10:17)

b. The Rejoicing - “so that ﻿﻿I may rejoice in the day of Christ”

The Philippians are going to reach out; People will be saved; Paul will rejoice in the day of Christ.

c. Being Rewarded - “that ﻿﻿I have not run in vain or labored in ﻿﻿vain.”

How does that work?

First: that day is the Rapture! It is also the time of rewards.

Paul will rejoice in the fruit of his labor, the Philippians. Then he will rejoice that they had been faithful and he had not run in vain. Their faithfulness will verify his faithfulness.

“It’s amazing what we can accomplish when we don’t care who gets the credit.”

II. Changing Us Outwardly – 2:17-18

A. Paul’s Example – 2:17

“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.”

Paul is speaking of himself being poured out as part of their sacrificial offering.

Paul was referring to the drink offering. It was not offered by itself but with another sacrifice; but it enhanced that other sacrifice.

B. Paul’s Exhortation – 2:18

“For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.”

So instead of feeling sorry for Paul, he wanted them to rejoice with him that in the will of God he was in prison so that he could reach them and enrich them to the glory of God. They will rejoice together, no matter who (or if anyone) gets the credit. And that’s what it’s all about.

Conclusion