

## Philippians 2:12-30

### Verses 12-13:

--(12) **Therefore**. . . ties us back to the previous exhortations of gospel-worthy lives, love to the brethren, and the self-giving example of Jesus Christ.

--**my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence**. . . is an expression of Paul's heart for these dear believers. His word to them is the byproduct of that love. He also encourages them to press on in the obedience that they have always shown—whether he was with them personally or not.

--There was a danger they could lean too heavily on Paul—especially while he was physically present. It would be wonderful to bring all your Bible questions and life problems to an apostle wouldn't it?

--That said, any minister that ultimately connects people to himself, and doesn't teach them to walk with God on their own, is no minister. He is an idol. I can be a good example, an older brother in Christ, and faithful pastor, but I am no man's Savior.

--**work out your own salvation**. . . We don't work *for* salvation but *by* salvation. The apostle Paul (who championed the grace of God and the gospel more than anyone else) is obviously not teaching works-based salvation. No one gets into heaven by good works. Paul made that clear in Romans and Galatians among other Scriptures.

--Even so, Paul constantly encourages those who are saved to press on! Only believers—those who have salvation—can follow this command. Since we have been given salvation through the work of Christ, we are called to live responsibly and work out what has been worked in.

--The tenses in the language are that they are to work out, for themselves, immediately.

--This is not done once in a single magical stroke. This **working out** of salvation is a life's work! Spiritual growth and sanctification are a lifelong process. \*It is easy to put up a plaque in my house that says: *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*. It is much harder and laborious to work that out for a lifetime!\*

--Why does Paul add **with fear and trembling**?

--First, because a lifetime command is a very important command.

--Second, because I believe he is still thinking of the last part of his exhortation through the example of Jesus Christ. We are working out our salvation before our Savior who paid a terrible price for us to have salvation, before the exalted Lord Jesus Christ, the Judge of the living and the dead, who is on the throne and to whom every knee will bow and every tongue confess!

--Third, to refuse to do so is, in fact, to work against God—as He is the One working in us.

--Sadly, we have such little reverence in our personal lives today. How many churches gather expecting and honoring the presence of God in their gatherings? How many would be surprised if God was manifest in their hearts personally or in their gathering publicly? \*Danger of faking reverence to God in high churches and ignoring it in low churches.\*

--(13) These words confuse people theologically but they are descriptive of experience!

--**for it is God who works in you.** . . . God is the One moving in us! He is always first in the equation. Salvation, or the Christian life, is the life of God living in me—working and willing—through His very Spirit.

**\*Galatians 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.\***

--God is always working.

**\*John 5:17: But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."\***

--Wonderfully, God has pledged Himself to the outworking of our salvation. He is the spark that ignites every flame of spiritual life.

--Realizing the work of God in us is essential to Christian life. Otherwise, working out our salvation is a chore—hard religion, rules, slavery. \*Simon (church, parents) says Vs. Jesus says\*

--But everything changes for the Christian, who has life because of a suffering Savior, and now no longer wants to live for themselves but for Him who gave His life for them. Now they live as children of God, giving sincere obedience from the heart.

--What does God's working in us look like? **Both to will and to do.** . . .

--God works in each of us a holy will to do something. These are desires and purposes we would have never known outside of the life of God in us.

**\*Meyer (Fit For the Master's Use): "God in you will work to will, and then God in you will work to do what He wills. First, God works to will. He does not work to make you feel, because feeling ends in smoke so often. God does not work in you to think, because you think and think again. But God works in you to will. That is, there rises up in your heart a desire, which becomes at last a purpose to be free. No one knows it, no one guesses it; but in your soul, there rises up the will."\***

--Unfortunately, we all also know the experience of resisting, quenching, and grieving God's work in us. That is why we must work out what God works in us with fear and trembling. Don't take for granted God's good work in you—conviction, repentance, thanksgiving, praise, desire!

--Blessedly, God will never abandon us in this process. He is so faithful despite our faithlessness. He will never leave us or forsake us. Like Christ with His disciples, He will see us through.

--See us through to what? **His good pleasure!**

--This is the end of it all. Why is God working in us? What is the end of our salvation? What is the point of it all? God's good pleasure!

--God has good pleasure in mankind, and in you and I personally, and everything He is working in us (that we are to be working out) will be pleasing to Him—no matter how small or insignificant to others or confusing to the unsaved world around us.

--Allow God to take the lead in His own good pleasure in your life. You cannot work out your own salvation without Him. You cannot set the pace or the direction. We only respond to the work He begins. Obey His clear word. Have faith in what you are called to trust.

#### **Verses 14-16:**

--**(14) Do all things without complaining and disputing.**

--Most of us do some things without grumbling and complaining.

--The Greek word for **complaining** means what you would think: personal murmuring, muttering, and grumbling.

--The Greek word for **disputing** was used of inward or outward doubting and bickering.

--A grumbling spirit reveals a distaste for God's will and pleasure. Murmuring is a sure sign of spiritual immaturity. \*Israel in the wilderness (Num. 14)\*

**\*1 Corinthians 10:10: Nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.\***

--This is a wonderful memory verse for children to memorize and recite to remind their parents!

--**(15)** Christian gratitude, contentment, and willing obedience shine brightly in a dark world that is hectic, selfish, self-entitled, doubting, and whiney!

--We are to be **blameless**—in terms of our outward observable conduct (**Lk. 1:6**). This is how Paul describes himself later in **3:6** with respect to his keeping the Jewish law.

--And **harmless**—has the idea of simplicity and purity. This was Jesus' description too:

**\*Matthew 10:16: Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.\***

--And **without fault**—which is also translated *without rebuke*.

--The descriptions are closely related but there was wordplay that we miss in the English as the Greek words are: *amemptos, akeraios, amometos*.

--Our simple and pure character toward God and men is to be in stark contrast to **a crooked and perverse generation** and allow us to **shine as lights in the world**. \*To be a light really isn't hard at all nowadays!\*

--Do you live in a dark nation, city, neighborhood, workplace, home? Live a content, simple, pure, godly life and you will be the salt of the earth and the light of the world!

--**(16)** If we do so then people will ask questions. They will ask *Why?* They will ask what our hope is. What then?

--**Holding fast the word of life**. . . People need to hear the Word of life! The Word of God brings life—spiritual life—where there is only death. \*The Word is a seed that contains its own life!\*

**\*1 Thessalonians 2:4: But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.\***

--Paul knows that if the dark world sees the light of God in our lives and hears the Word of Life from us, there will be spiritual fruit. In that, he rejoices.

--Otherwise, his fear is *that I have not run in vain or labored in vain*. Paul says something similar in **1 Cor. 9:26 + Gal. 2:2**. Paul didn't want his labor, his very life, to be meaningless or void of fruit.

### **Verses 17-18:**

--The illustration here is much easier to understand than its application. Like the OT drink offering of wine poured out on a sacrifice (**Ex. 29:40; Lev. 23:13**); Paul is saying he was willing to have his life poured out on the more substantial sacrifice of their faith.

**\*2 Timothy 4:6: For I am ready to be poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.\***

--I have seen the joy of men and women pouring out their lives on the faith of others. I have known my own share of this joy.

### **Verses 19-24:**

--Now we come to a section where Paul commends two men who embody the very things he has been exhorting.

--We sometimes fear complimenting, praising, or thanking another person who has blessed us, fearing it might stir up their pride, but I don't know if that is a Biblical sentiment. In fact, a word of thanks is more likely to make a humble heart humbler than conceited.

**\*Proverbs 27:2: Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger and not your own lips.\***

--Paul here, and in many other places, doesn't fear honestly and sincerely blessing and honoring those who distinguish themselves as selfless fellow-laborers in Christ.

--**(19)** First, Paul promises to send Timothy once he knows what the outcome of his trial will be **(23)**. The apostle is an example to us in the way he holds the tension of what he expects God will do (to be freed and live) with what might still be possible for God to do (allow him to be put to death as a witness of Christ).

--The church would know Timothy well because he had been with Paul at Philippi when the church began **(Acts 16)**.

--**(20-21)** Paul commends Timothy by saying he was the only person *like-minded* or *like-souled* (used only here in the NT) with himself. Timothy cared for souls like Paul did.

--The Greek word for *care* is the same as Paul uses in **4:6** or is used in **Mt. 6:27; Lk. 10:41; 1 Cor. 7:33**.

--Paul's statement in **21** seems very strange and is variously interpreted. I think Paul says this to illustrate the general lack of self-giving servants like Timothy or Epaphroditus. Paul knew Timothy's focus would be the soul-care of the Philippian believers and not himself. Timothy wouldn't be offended if people didn't ask about him or his needs—he was focused on others.

--**(22)** They had proven experience of Timothy's godly character. Though likely only in his thirties, Timothy was not a novice to ministering the gospel or pastoring Christian life.

--Timothy was Paul's true son in the faith though it doesn't seem like he had any sons in the flesh. As many fleshly sons followed their fathers in vocation or trade—so Timothy did with Paul.

--(23-24) Paul's general plan was to wait for the outcome of his trial, send Timothy with news, and follow shortly after.

### Verses 25-30:

--(25) Paul mentions another man of God, Epaphroditus. He was sent from the Philippian church to minister to Paul and bring an offering. Now Paul says it is **necessary**—*most needful*—to send him back, presumably with this epistle.

--Paul had been duly impressed with this man's love for Christ, owning him as **my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier**. In the family of God he was a **brother**; in the field of labor he was a **worker**; in the fire of battle he was a **soldier**. \*It is so good to find like-souls in Christ!\*

--On their end, he was their **messenger** and *minister*.

--(26) Paul shares that he was distressed because they were worried about him! A fact indicative of Paul's selfless character.

--(27) Epaphroditus was so sick he had nearly died, but God had mercy on him.

--(Interestingly, Paul says nothing about miraculous healing here. God's mercy without miracle.)

--(28) Paul was sending him immediately for their joy.

--(29-30) Epaphroditus was to be held in honor for his willingness to gamble his life for the cause of Christ. The Greek for **not regarding** has the idea of *gambling* and was used in **Acts 15:26: men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

--He did so **for the work of Christ**—not just for a brave or daring reputation. As far as we know, he wasn't preaching or doing miracles, just serving. \*A young Spurgeon won the respect of his congregation by hazarding his life to minister to them during an epidemic of Asiatic cholera in London.\*

\*Dallimore (Spurgeon): *"Family after family summoned me to the bedside of the smitten and almost every day I was called to visit the grave."\**

--When Paul speaks of **what was lacking** he does not mean the Philippians were slack. He means they lacked opportunity to do what they truly desired to do.

--In all of this, Paul wanted to make it clear that their type of selfless service was worthy of honor just as Christ's selflessness was worthy of honor.

\*Mackintosh (Short Papers): *"Thus will it ever be. A man who thinks of himself saves others the trouble of thinking about him. But the lowly, the humble, the modest, the unpretending, the retiring, the self-emptied, who think of and live for others, who walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, these are the persons to be thought of and cared for, loved and honored, as they ever will be by God and His people."\**