

Ins & Outs of the Christian Life – Philippians 2:12-18

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Read Text.

B. What Does ‘Salvation’ Mean?

1. ‘**Salvation**’ means different things to different people.
2. Being saved defines itself by the **context** in which it’s used.
 - a. At **work**, your fellow employees might talk about being saved from the next round of **layoffs**.
 - b. If you’re at the **doctor’s office** or **hospital**, you hope to be saved from a **serious illness**.
 - c. If you’re listening to the **news**, the reporter might speak of being saved from **economic** or **environmental** disaster.
 - d. You’re with **friends** & the conversation turns to someone being saved from divorce or some other form of **relational conflict**.
 - e. Then at **church**, we talk about being saved from **sin & hell**.
3. When the setting is work, a doctor’s office, the news & friends, salvation is something **tangible** because it’s **close, practical, specific & real**.
4. But when the context is church, salvation seems **distant**; it’s deferred till **later**.
5. For many, salvation in the **religious sense** is **undefined & intangible** because heaven seems so far off & hazy.
6. That’s unfortunate, because what the **Bible** means by salvation includes all those close & practical things as well.
7. Jesus not only saves us from hell, He saves us from sin – not just after we die, **but right now**.
8. Salvation is for **this** life too.
9. Eternal life doesn’t begin **after** death; it begins the **moment** we’re born again.
10. That’s what we’re looking at today.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 12-13

1. Paul begins by encouraging the Philippians to **press-on** in the faith.
- 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;
2. The Philippians’ relationship with God was personal & real.
 - a. They didn’t just make a **show of faith** when Paul was watching.
 - b. Their zeal was sincere.
3. So he urges them to **not ease up** in their pursuit of Christ.
4. That a good word for us!
 - a. New believers often have tremendous zeal for spiritual growth.
 - b. Everything is **new & exciting**; they can’t wait for Sunday or their weekly group to meet so they can gather with others to worship & learn.
 - c. Then, after a couple years, because they **HAVE** grown, what they hear isn’t so new.
 - 1) The excitement **dims** a bit.
 - 2) And they settle in to a **comfortable routine**.
 - d. The zeal that marked the early days **cools**.
5. This happens to nearly everyone. What we need to know is that we can regain an eagerness to go further in our walk with God.
6. Listen, it’s good to look back & rejoice over the ground gained, the growth grace has given.
 - a. But joy is not in where we’ve been.
 - b. It’s in He who’s waiting at the end.
7. Look ahead! See how much **more grace** there is to obtain. Go deeper in the things of God!
8. We’ll come back to this later, but let’s move on for now. Paul says at the end of v. 12 -
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.
1. There’s a long running feud between those who say salvation is **all of God** & those who say we must **work for it**.

2. Paul brings both sides of the issue together & shows the proper balance.
3. God first works in us **both** the will & ability to please Him; we then give practical expression to that in how we live.
4. Salvation **is** all of God's grace, but that grace produces a partnership that changes our lifestyle.
5. He works in, then we work out. // But notice – it all **begins** WITH GOD!
6. God's Spirit moves us **both** to will & do what pleases Him.
 - a. First, the **desire** to please God, to honor Him, to love, serve, worship & glorify God comes from Him.
 - b. Then, the **ability** to please, honor, love, serve, worship & glorify Him comes from Him.
 - c. Were it not for God's grace, were it not the drawing of His Holy Spirit, **no one** would give a rip bout God.
 - d. It all begins with Him; with His steadfast love wooing us.
7. But we must **respond** to that wooing.
 - a. We answer that invitation.
 - b. We actualize the potential to obey God.
8. This is a bow. Because both food & knowledge have entered **into** me, I possess the **potential** to draw & shoot this arrow.
 - a. But that potential means nothing until I actually, lift the bow, draw & loose.
 - b. We could say that the **failure** to engage potential in actual work is a **tragedy**.
9. In the same way, God has given us the potential, both the ability & the will, to pick up the bow of life & hit the target of His will.
10. This is a **good** illustration because the word '**sin**' means 'to miss the mark.'
 - a. It was an archery term, called out when an archer missed the bull's eye.
 - b. The life we get from Adam possesses both will & ability to shoot the arrows of choice.
 - c. The problem is because of the Fall, we are bent & crooked so that our aim is off. Look at vs. 14-16.

B. Vs. 14-16

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, ¹⁶ holding fast 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.

1. This fallen world, linked as it is to Adam is torqued out of proper alignment.
2. It's lost its way & stands in opposition to God.
3. People make their choices like shooting a bow without a clue where they ought to aim.
 - a. It's embarrassing to admit their aim is off, that they can't even **see** the target.
 - b. So they bend the bow of life & shoot the arrows of choice, then draw targets around where ever they strike. This is happiness! This is fulfillment, This is religion.
4. But the life the Spirit of God brings the believer opens our eyes to the true target of God's good pleasure, His will.
 - a. The Spirit gives us the will to aim at the right target.
 - b. Then He empowers us with the ability to pull & loose choices that hit the bull's eye.
5. That's what Paul means when he says we are to work out our own salvation because God has worked in us both to will & to do of His good pleasure.
6. The salvation Jesus won for us isn't just from hell. It's **that**, praise God. But it's **more**!
 - a. It's for **now**! Today.
 - b. In both the Old & New Testaments, the original words for salvation mean so much more than the narrow way most people think of them today.
 - c. Salvation means everything you can think of that's wholesome & good.
 - d. It's the **condition** of being safe, secure, happy, healthy, prosperous & at peace.
 - e. It meant **freedom** from want or need.
 - f. It was **liberty** from all restraints that kept a person from realizing their potential.
7. The salvation Jesus won is a return to the way God originally meant things to be.
 - a. While the world as a whole will not see that salvation till Jesus comes again & establishes the Kingdom of God on Earth,

b. We don't have to wait for it to be applied **in our individual lives** because we've already become a part of that Kingdom.

c. So Paul says –

work out your own salvation

d. “you own” – your specific, unique calling & relationship with Jesus.

e. God has given you both the will & ability to please Him—in all things!

f. Go for it! Live it out!

g. What needs to be made right, right now in your life?

h. What has the Spirit been **working** the will of God in, in you?

i. Where have you been off-target but God is calling you to take a different aim?

1) Relationships?

2) Health, diet?

3) Your walk with Him?

4) Finances?

5) Sex life?

8. Take careful note of **HOW** we are to apply ourselves to this –

work out your own salvation with fear and trembling

a. These are strong words which speak of a frame of mind **locked** on one thing.

b. Some emotions are of such a nature that they allow other feelings as well.

c. Happiness easily co-exists with love.

d. Anger can co-exist with sympathy.

e. But some emotions by their very nature **dominate** our thoughts.

f. That's what Paul means here. Fear & trembling describes a sense of purpose zeroed in on one thing.

g. We must be **single-minded** in our commitment to live for God.

h. Any dalliance with this crooked & perverse world means disaster.

C. Vs. 17-18

1. A moment ago I said that while we are to experience our salvation **immediately** as the Holy Spirit works in us both to will & to do God's pleasure, **the world won't experience salvation until Jesus returns**.

2. As Paul says in v. 15, the world system is bent by & toward evil.

3. That means as we day by day work out their salvation in an environment that hates God, we're going to face opposition **from** the world.

4. What we need to keep in mind is that being the object of the world's hate is part & parcel of working out our salvation.

5. Look at what Paul says in vs. 17-18 –

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.

6. Paul was in prison & might very well end up under the executioner's blade.

7. He saw his situation as **evidence** he truly was saved. And that was a cause for celebration.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Deeper

1. Paul begins in v. 12 by urging the Philippians to press on & continue to grow in grace.

2. They must renew their determination to implement the things the Spirit was showing them.

3. The grace of God that first wooed & won them is a mighty river they can go deeper in.

4. What was true for the Philippians is true for the Oxnardians.

5. Grace is a mighty river.

a. Some here today are standing on the shore with their shoes on, dry as the desert.

b. Some have taken off their shoes & dabble their toes.

c. Others are up to their ankles.

d. Some are to their knees.

e. Others are to their waists.

f. A few are deeper but keep their feet on the bottom.

g. It's time to launch out all the way & let the river of God's grace carry you along.