

# Work It Out

Ձեր Փրկութիւնը Գործեցէք

## Philippians 2:12–18

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

<sup>14</sup>Do all things without grumbling or disputing, <sup>15</sup>that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup>holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. <sup>17</sup>Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. <sup>18</sup>Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Let us review chapter 2: 1-11

- Unity in Christ (one mind, one love)
- Humility in Christ (considering others more important)
- Christ is the Model of a Humble Servant (Emptied himself, humbled himself)
- Obedience to Christ (Every knee shall bow)
- Witness about Christ (Every tongue shall confess)

### 1. Work Out Your Salvation

**Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13 ESV)**

The word “**therefore**” ties the preceding poem with the rest.

If Jesus had that kind of humility... therefore we need to follow his example.

### **-My beloved:**

Paul loves this church; “my beloved” “my dear people.” Paul loves them and God loves them... He speaks from his heart, to their heart. (Միբսւէ սիբսւ). In chapter 1:5 Paul called them “**partners in the Gospel.**” He knows that they are obedient to God; not only when the “*rabbi-Paul*” the teacher is over their shoulders. No, in his absence they are obedient to Jesus.

If Jesus had that kind of humility... therefore we need to follow his example.

How?

Command 1

**-Work out** your salvation.

It does not say **work for**. God already **worked in**; we should **work out**.

In the first century the verb “work out” was used for mining silver.

- Workers would enter the mine and bring out the silver that was already there.
- They did not put that precious metal in the mine.
- God in His creation did put the chemical element in there. That is not their job.
- Their job was to bring it to the surface for others to see and enjoy.

### **-Worked in:**

God worked in us through Jesus Christ. We are saved through Christ. Salvation is a free gift offered to us by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

The Grace of God is free.

Thus, therefore, once we receive the costly grace of God, **we should work it out...**

What does that mean?

Paul told this church several things about that:

- it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment (1:9)
- to be pure and blameless (1:10)
- to serve to advance the gospel (1:12)
- to walk in a manner of life worthy of the gospel of Christ (1:27)
- to be one mind, one love, to learn from the humility of Christ (2<sup>nd</sup> chapter)

Here is my interpretation:

Listen to His voice, apply His Word in your life; obey His commandments;  
Let Jesus be YOUR LORD (His will over your will).  
He is Lord over your life, your marriage, your family, your kids, your finances, your business, your farm...

How beautiful is this lifestyle? How much I want to follow this lifestyle and how much I want you as my congregation to follow these commands.

**-Do it in fear and trembling:**

Those words are from the Old Testament. They mean holy respect, awe and wonder towards God. God has the primary place in my life. I love Him and He loves me. I respect my Lord and King and approach Him in awe and humility.

Illustration:

Let me give you an example from the Early church when an epidemic hit them. What was early church's response? What did they do? Did they work out their salvation by practicing their faith?

There were several plagues in the Roman empire. The two greatest were the one of the second century, brought back by soldiers who had been fighting in the east, and the second one broke out and spread to the large cities in the third century. The second one is the Plague of Cyprian because Cyprian was the Bishop of Carthage. We're told by [historical records] that 5,000 people died a day in Rome because of the plague. (see details below)<sup>1</sup>

The Romans didn't know what to do. They asked the gods to remove this punishment. They had no organized response. It was the Christians who really stepped in.

They offered burial services to people thrown in the streets. They began to take care of those who were sick, first in their own family and then in their own church and finally outside. Deacons very quickly took on the ministry of mercy in the early Christian Church, and that became one of the best-known ways in which Christians were recognized.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. No Grumbling but Shining as Lights

**Do all things without grumbling or disputing,<sup>15</sup> that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,<sup>16</sup> holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. (Phil 2:14-16 ESV)**

What is the second command?

### **No grumbling or dispute...**

I get tired from negative people around me. Some are experts in complaining without doing anything.

Paul was not naive; he knew that there were some frictions in the church (chapter 4). He knew how people of different backgrounds would have disputes and grumble. He was not against discussion or understanding each other. He himself had disagreements with Barnabas, for example, as we read in Acts.

He was interested in a **Christ-centered attitude facing those challenges.**

Remember this is the early church and their conduct was a testimony in the “dark” world.

During the civil war of Lebanon, many neighborhoods were destroyed. People were discouraged. The night was dark, and no one wanted to live in that neighborhood anymore. When the fighting was a little calmer, one person decided to rebuild his property. I remember, no one wanted to be back to that area. It was strange. Destruction all over, yet one family renovated their home. For example, during the evening when all over was dark, this family with a private generator lighted their home. This led other families to come and renovate their homes. That family’s courageous act helped change the entire street.

What Paul is drawing here brought back my memories of how one family brought light and hope into a destroyed neighborhood. How about us Christians?

Walk blameless and innocent... walk in the right attitude, worthy of the gospel; walk in a way that the light of Christ will shine in this dark world.<sup>2</sup> Walk until the day of the judgment, until the day of Jesus’ return.

In his prayer to His Father, Jesus prays for us:

**I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.**  
(John 17:23)

Eugene Peterson paraphrases in The Message:

Do everything readily and cheerfully—no bickering, no second-guessing allowed! Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this filthy and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night so I'll have good cause to be proud of you on the day that Christ returns. You'll be living proof that I didn't go to all this work for nothing. (Phil 2:14-16 MSG)

### **3. Rejoice together**

**<sup>17</sup> Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. <sup>18</sup> Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.** (Phil 2:17-18 ESV)

The language that Paul uses indicates he is suffering. In the context that we read he is in prison, and he is there because of his faith and boldness to preach. A drink offering involves pouring wine on top of another offering (Numbers 28:7). The image is that Paul being poured out like a drink offering.

Not only Paul is suffering, the church in Philippi is also suffering for their faith. (1:29-30)

Then Paul says: "I am glad and rejoice with you all, and you also rejoice with me..."

Is there joy in suffering for faith?

In Acts we read:

"Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name." (Acts 5:41 ESV)

I don't think we need to seek suffering. We are speaking here about suffering because of our faith. I remember when I was 18 years old, group of us were

distributing Bibles door to door in Lebanon. The police put us in custody. Together we sang songs and prayed, and then they released us. Suffering together was healing for all of us, and we were rejoicing and singing songs. PLEASE notice, I was not beaten or tortured. I don't know how joyful that is. I believe the joy here is not happiness. I think it is inner peace that only God can give us even though we face opposition, suffering....

### **Application:**

God has worked in. Now it's your turn to work out.

Amen

1 Christianity Today, March 2020. By Morgan Lee, Interview with Gary Ferngren

They carried away a large portion of the citizens of the Roman empire, especially in the cities. We're told by [historical records] that 5,000 people died a day in Rome because of the plague. There were similar figures for Carthage and for Alexandria, the biggest cities in the Roman empire. And in each of those cities, it was the Christian church that undertook to do what they could because the Romans have no pattern of treating a mass disease. They didn't seem to know what to do and therefore they did nothing except plead with the gods to remove what was considered to be a punishment on the Roman society. The Romans had no organized response. It was the Christians who really introduced that concept.

They did it because of "Imago Dei," the image of God. That all human beings, Christian, non-Christian, pagan, whatever, are bearers of God's image. And that is something that has a spiritual component and also one that naturally draws our compassion to others. That was the foundation for it. There was nothing like that in Roman cultural or moral values.

How did they do it? They offered burial to those who were exposed on the streets in times of epidemic plagues. Conventional morality, respect for even members of your own family, was abandoned because people didn't know what to do. They were overwhelmed by the sheer suffering. People would often throw bodies out into the streets and they lay on buried. So Christians who had been offering a burial service to their own members began to bury pagans. They began to take care of those who were sick, first in their own family and then in their own church and finally outside because they had already in the Book of Acts established deacons who supplemented the elders in providing acts of mercy. Deacons very quickly took on the ministry of mercy in the early Christian Church, and that became one of the best-known ways in which Christians were recognized.

2. Each person has been created by God in his image and is, therefore, from Christ's perspective, worth dying for. Then we see each member of the family of God as a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Each is a brother or and sister "for whom Christ died" (Romans 14:15). The body of Christ needs eyes and ears and hands and all sorts of members (1 Corinthians 12:14-26). Our brothers and sisters—even those whom we disagree with—are precious and necessary. Such a worldview gives us the perspective we need in order to work out our salvation. (Scott Grant, May 6, 2018 PBC, Palo Alto, CA