

Living out our salvation

Philippians 2:13-18

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We have been doing a series on the Book of Philippians and I love this book. Paul is writing to the Church at Philippi and he is encouraged by them, he loves them with a passion and what's more...normally in Paul's writings he is trying to correct bad patterns that were forming within churches, well that's not the case here...while Paul new there was some breakdown in unity happening, he was still well pleased by the faith of those that were in the church. But one of the reasons this letter was written was because Paul loved this place so much he wanted to do his bit to see the church remain in the unity and love they had been experiencing.

Today we again follow on from previous weeks, starting in chapter 2 (looking at 6 verses), verses 13-18 where Graham left us two weeks ago.

Let's read it together

Do Everything Without Grumbling

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” ^u Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. ¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸ So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. ¹

Again as good faith filled believers who handle the Word of God correctly...what do you immediately notice in verse 12?

¹ The New International Version. (2011). (Php 2:12–18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Verse 12 starts with the word “Therefore” and so we need to ask the question...**what is the “therefore”, there for?**

The only way to get that answer is to read what came earlier in the preceding verses. But for sake of time though...if you trace it back you find that **Paul was talking about how the Church at Philippi had been conducting themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.**

He had encouraged them to continue in the mindset of Christ and reassured them that together, they were partnering to further the Gospel and he felt a real sense of connectedness with them in this mission.

So, our verses this morning lead on from that and Paul says...

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, (my bro’s I feel close too) *as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,* **¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.**

If you are like me...that’s quite a mouthful and actually quite hard to understand

Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling...

You might be a little cleverer than I am but if someone said that to me, I would really need some time to consider just what he was saying, and he says...**¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.** What was he saying within these two phrases? It must have held importance to the Church at Philippi and therefore, it holds importance for us today as well.

If we are going to learn from this today let’s look at each of these phrases... ***Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling***

Paul can’t be encouraging believers to live in a continuous condition of nervousness and anxiety. That would contradict the many times he says we should have peace of mind, courage, and confidence in the God.

So the first key to understanding what he is saying, lies within the meaning of the word **FEAR** which in the Greek is **φόβος (phobos)** in this context it means “reverence” or “respect”

This is a reverence that is God-given, and it enables men to respect God's authority, obey his commandments and hate and shun all forms of evil ²

And this is what Paul is saying here – Continue to do this guys...we have the God given ability to obey the commands God gives us, don't give in to evil...continue to walk in the ways of the righteousness...in doing this, you continue to work out your salvation in fear

- Be he also said you do it with **trembling**

This word "trembling" in the Greeks is **τρόμος** [trom·os/]

Trom-os is used to describe the anxiety of someone who **distrusts his ability completely to meet all requirements upon himself**, but religiously, he does his utmost to fulfil his duty.³

So there is a sense of **give it your very best shot** going on here.

So if we are going to work out our salvation in fear and trembling *or Phobos and tromos*

We are going to respect and revere God we are going to obey His commands, we're going to walk in righteousness because this is our duty and we are going to fulfil it to the very best of our abilities, while totally reliant on Him to make up for any shortcomings. We are to have a healthy fear of offending God if we don't live this way, while at the same time though, showing an awe and respect for His majesty and holiness.

And then it says in verse ¹³ **for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.**

Paul was simply reminding the Philippians here that they were to work out, what God had worked in.

² Douglas, J. D. (1996). Fear. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed., p. 365). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

³ Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

They were to live in such a way that would testify that God had done his saving work within them. They were to show outwardly - what God had done inwardly.⁴

And it's the same for us today...as we work out our salvation, it should be evident to those around us that we have had a change within us and it should challenge their thinking and actually, it should be attractive to them.

But just as we start to get our heads around what Paul's saying...you need to understand one other thing from out of the Greek. Look at the highlighted words in the scripture...

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Those words “You” and “Your” in Greek are used in the plural, not the singular...that means that Paul is saying this, not to the individuals that go into making up the church at Philippi but to the body of believers.

So in today's context it's saying this...**Northgate** – ensure you respect and revere God, obey His commands, walk in righteousness because this is your duty as the body of Christ. Fulfil it to the very best of your abilities, while remaining totally reliant on Him to make up for any shortcomings. Have a healthy fear of offending God if you don't live this way. Treat Him with awe and respect because as you live this way, Rototuna's Community will see what God is doing in you, and the community will be attracted to God because of Northgate's witness....does that make sense?

And then in the verses 14-18 Paul takes it further as he talks of what our witness should look like...he says:

¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” ^u Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.

⁴ Ellsworth, R. (2004). *Opening up Philippians* (pp. 42–43). Leominster: Day One Publications.

¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸ So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. ⁵

Certain things are simply not part of the Christians life, and when unbelievers see these things in us, they are quick to conclude that there is nothing to our Christianity. Complaining and grumbling are among these things according to Paul.

We need to believe that God is sovereign over all things, including even those circumstances we find unpleasant and undesirable. And 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 probably do much better.

If we are not on our guard, grumbling can become a way of life with us:

- the weather is not what we would like it to be;
 - people don't treat us the way they should;
 - the church leaders don't handle things correctly;
- and the list goes on!

R Ellsworth in a book called "Opening up Philippians" says:

We can go a long way towards winning over 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).

How do we, as God's people, shine in this world? Paul says it is by 'holding fast the word of life' (v. 16).⁶

As Paul reminded the Philippians - I remind us at Northgate...it's God's Word that dispels the darkness around us.

We have been preaching on the topic of the Bible in our evening services...looking at the Scripture being God inspired words to us, looking at the authority of the

⁵ *The New International Version*. (2011). (Php 2:14–18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁶ Ellsworth, R. (2004). *Opening up Philippians* (pp. 45–46). Leominster: Day One Publications.

Scriptures and the accuracy of them throughout the centuries...come tonight as Kemp unpacks the last one of the series on Translations and how we can feed on it...but if we continue to use it, to preach it, to live it out here at Northgate...**we will continue to see lives touched and changed for all of eternity and as Paul encourages his church to remain true to this, I encourage my church to do the same.**

Paul rounds out these verses by saying that if he had to die, he would be happy to regard it as 'the finishing touch' to their lives of service and sacrifice.⁷

And quite simply put...**that's where we should be aiming to get to as well...**

I want to know that on my death bed...I can say "God, to the best of my ability, I have lived my life in service and sacrifice to you. I want to know that the work that I have done while on this earth has been one that has reaped good, eternal consequences not just for myself...but for others as well.

And taking that a little wider, I would hope that if anything happened to Northgate, and we were no longer here, then **I hope that our community would miss the impact that we had had...**

Together then, let's be encouraged to continue to make a difference by the light we carry and let's ensure that in our part of the world...**God's name is being made famous by what we do together** as we serve our community and we honour God with the respect he so deserves.

Bless you, It's a privilege to minister alongside you all.

Paul gives us a lot to think about in these Scriptures and I think a great way that we can show our love to God today is as a collective body of people filled with faith and in this place with one purpose this morning and that's to honour God and thank Jesus for what He's secured for us...I think it would be honouring for us, to all pause and together thank Jesus for enabling us to be able to work out our salvation, because if we couldn't, we would all be destined for a Christ-less eternity.

⁷ Ellsworth, R. (2004). *Opening up Philippians* (p. 46). Leominster: Day One Publications.

Today we are pause to remember the One who made it possible for us to be redeemed to the Father...in fact He said that when we come together we should take the time to remember Him and what He has done for us.

So, as we finish today, let's do it by taking communion together.

Can I invite those who are serving to come forward to hand out the elements and let's – together, pause and remember our mighty Saviours work, which He freely did for each one of us.

Bless you.