**CONTINUE TO WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION**

Philippians 2:12-30

Key Verse: 12b-13

 “Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”

**Introduction**



 The key verse, “Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you…” indicates that our salvation is ongoing in the present tense. Throughout the New Testament, this teaching is repeated. Before his suffering and death, Jesus declared, “…the one who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Mt 24:13). Paul also said Timothy his spiritual son in 1 Timothy 4:16, “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” Romans 2:6-7 says, “God ‘will repay each person according to what they have done.’ To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.” Hebrews 3:14 says, “We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.” These teachings help us to continue to work out our salvation by being obedient to the end. Today, let us seriously examine our life of faith and make a decision to continue to work out our salvation.

1. Read verses 12-13. How did Paul exhort us to work out our salvation? Why should we do so? (13, 1:6) What is God’s good purpose?

1-1, Read verses 12-13.

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.

1-2, How did Paul exhort us to work out our salvation?

 ***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,***

* The word “therefore” which connects Christ’s example in verses 6-11 to the Philippians.
* Christ was obedient to God to the point of death. Therefore, Christians are to be obedient to God. If we Christians lose obedience to God, we have no difference from godless people.
* Here the words, “as you have always obeyed…” indicate that the Philippians had obeyed Jesus’ words, not only in Paul’s presence but also in his absence. In other words, they had obeyed God faithfully, not before people, but before God.
* He said, “…continue to work out your salvation.” The words, “work out,” means to work with God to accomplish his salvation purpose.
* In view of the Bible, salvation has three time dimensions: past, present and future. The past dimension is that we were redeemed by God through our repentance and faith in Jesus. (Justification)
* The present dimension is that we grow spiritually and become more and more like Jesus. We call this sanctification.
* Then the future dimension is to enter eternal glory with our Lord Jesus in heaven. This is called glorification.
* In short, believers have been saved, are being saved, and will be saved. Salvation is an ongoing process.
* You and I are now in the present dimension that is to grow and become more and more like Jesus.
* Many Christians today do not fully understand the meaning of salvation. It is because the church overly emphasizes salvation by faith alone, not by works.
* It is true that we believers are saved by faith and by God’s grace alone, not by our works. But after being saved by faith alone, we must continue to work out our salvation by obeying Jesus’ teachings.
* As we well know God’s grace is free to us, but not to God. It cost him so much. He crucified his only Son Jesus for us. It is not “cheap grace”, but “costly grace”.
* But we cheapen it by being ungrateful, by living lazy lives spiritually or by sinning. Apostle Paul did know such God’s costly grace and continued to work out his salvation willingly and wholeheartedly.
* So we are to work out our salvation. In other words, we must be sanctified. Jesus prayed to God for his disciples, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (Jn 17:17). We can be sanctified when we obey the words of God.
* Obedience to God’s words is the sure sign of sanctification that takes place in one’s life. It is like the Israelites who had taken a long journey from Egypt the land of slavery to Canaan the Promised Land.
* To them Exodus from Egypt was just a beginning. They had to travel all the way to Canaan, passing through the wilderness, where God gave them his laws to be sanctified to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.
* In the same way, God wants his people to be holy. May God touch our hearts so that we can continue to work out our salvation by obeying the words of God daily.
* Paul added the words, **“with fear and trembling.”** These words tell us to have a right attitude before God.
* Here fear is **not** a fear of being condemned eternally. Rather, it is a reverent attitude and concern to give God the honor and glory he deserves.
* When we have such fear, we can resist temptation and sin. In reverence, we are willing to live in obedience to God and live a holy life.
* When we have such fear, we obey God sincerely and work out our salvation with a sober mind.

1-3, Why should we do so? (13, 1:6)

 ***for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.***

 ***being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***

* Salvation work is done not by us but by God. God works in us to fulfill his good purpose.
* Here Paul gave the reason why Christians must work out their salvation with fear and trembling – because God is also working in them.
* God who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ. (1:6)
* God works within each of us in and through the Holy Spirit. Like living water in an all sufficient well, it will continue to spring up as a living source within.
* Since God has done and is doing a work in us, we have a greater responsibility to work diligently with fear and trembling regarding our own salvation and walk with the Lord. God’s work in us increases our responsibility and it never lessens it.
* Those that take God’s sovereignty and working and use them as an excuse for inaction and lethargy are like the wicked and lazy servant of [Matthew 25:24-30](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%2025.24-30).
* Those that are really God’s servants use their understanding of His sovereignty and omnipotence as a motivation for greater, more dedicated service to Him.
* Both to will and to do: God’s work in us extends to the transformation of our will, as well as changing our actions (to do).
* For His good purpose- it reminds us of Genesis 1:31. “God saw all that he had made it was very good.
* God’s pleasure: This is the motive behind God’s work in our life. He does so because it gives Him pleasure to do it.

1-4, What is God’s good purpose?

* It is to sanctify us and grow us to be like Jesus. When Jesus called Peter, Peter didn’t know God’s good purpose for him.
* When Peter continued to work out his salvation by obeying Jesus’ words with fear and trembling, Jesus not only saved him but also raised him as a rock like foundation for churches and a Bible teacher for all peoples of all nations.
* God began his work in us. God will fulfill his good purpose in us while we continue to work out our salvation.
* In the sight of God, we are not ordinary people. We are extraordinary people because God is doing his great work in us and will fulfill his purpose.

2. Read verses 14-18. Why should we do everything without grumbling and arguing? (14-15a) What happens when God’s children hold firmly to the word of life? (15b-16) What made Paul rejoice with them even if he sacrificed like a drink offering? (17-18)

2-1, Read verses 14-18.

 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.” 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.

2-2, Why should we do everything without grumbling and arguing? (14-15a)

 ***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.”***

* We must do everything without grumbling and arguing and become blameless and pure children of God. Grumbling and arguing destroy the body of Christ. The Israelites in the wilderness grumbled and argued continually with God and God’s servants.
* Because of it, the whole Israelites suffered for 40 years and died in the wilderness. God took them to the Promised Land when they stopped grumbling and arguing and gave thanks to God and obeyed him.
* So instead of grumbling and arguing let us rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thes 5:16).

2-3, What happens when God’s children hold firmly to the word of life? (15b-16)

***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.***

* We must hold firmly to the word of life and become like stars in the sky. The word of God is the word of life. It gives eternal life. It is the truth that is the anchor for our souls.
* When we hold firmly to the word of God, we will be like shining stars in the dark sky. The Godless world has been always been warped and crooked because of the lack of God’s Word.
* What the world needs needs most is the light of the world, who is Jesus in us, the living influence of Christians. It is the time of spiritual revival. It is why our Spring Bible conference will be based on the theme, “Jesus is the Light of the world.”
* In history, spiritual revivals have always come during the dark times. It often begins with a few young people who hold firmly to the word of life.
* In this warped and crooked generation, young people in Christ must rise and shine the light of Jesus.
* We pray that God may stir our hearts to become great stars and bring revivals in our family, in our church and in our community and the whole world.

2-4, What made Paul rejoice with them even if he sacrificed himself like a drink offering? (17-18)

 ***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.***

* Paul uses the metaphor of “being poured out like a drink offering.” Israelite priests, after placing burning sacrifices on the altar, would then pour wine onto them (Lev 23:18, 37).
* This wine or “drink offering” was the final act that made the sacrifice acceptable to God. In using this metaphor, Paul acknowledges that the Philippians had already offered a sacrifice and service to God by faith.
* Now Paul was willing to do anything - even die - that their sacrifice might be pleasing and acceptable to God. Paul did not think about himself, but about Christ and his people.
* Paul offered his life joyfully, not reluctantly. So he said, **“I am glad and rejoice with all of you,”** even in a prison cell, awaiting death.
* This is a theme repeated from [Philippians 1:20](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Phil%201.20).
* Paul’s life was going to be a sacrifice for Jesus Christ, either in life or in death. This was a source of gladness and joy for Paul, and he wants the Philippians to adopt the same attitude.
* This is joy based not on circumstances (quite the opposite, really), but based in the fact of a life totally committed to Jesus Christ. It is Paul’s gospel!

3. Read verses 19-24. What was Paul’s plan for the Philippians? (19) In what respect was Timothy exemplary? (20-21) How did Timothy prove himself in the Lord? (22) What did Paul hope? (23-24)

3-1, Read verses 19-24.

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. **20** I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. **21** For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. **22** But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. **23** I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. **24** And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

3-2, What was Paul’s plan for the Philippians? (19)

***I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.***

* Paul had hoped to send Timothy to the Philippians soon to help them grow spiritually.
* Timothy showed a pastor’s heart and concern for his sheep for God’s glory. How?

3-3, In what respect was Timothy exemplary? (20-21)

***I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.***

* The reason he chose Timothy was that there was no one else like him who showed genuine concern for their welfare.
* Everyone looked out for their own interests, not just those of Jesus Christ. But Timothy looked for the interest of Christ Jesus.

3-4, How did Timothy prove himself in the Lord? (22)

 ***But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.***

* Timothy proved himself as a Christ-centered person.
* He served with Paul in the work of the gospel as a son with his father. Paul and Timothy had a deep love relationship. In order to serve God’s people, we need to form relationships like theirs and work together in love.

3-5, What did Paul hope? (23-24)

 ***I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. 24 And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.***

4. Read verses 25-30. How did Paul call Epaphroditus to them? (25) Why did Paul want to send him back to them? (26-30) How did Epaphroditus reflect the character of Christ?

4-1, Read verses 25-30.

But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. **26** For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. **27** Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. **28** Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. **29** So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, **30** because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

4-2, How did Paul call Epaphroditus to them? (25)

 ***But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.***

* Paul was sending Epaphroditus back to Philippi to encourage the Philippians. Paul regarded him as his brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, and also messenger.
* ‘Brother’ speaks of a relationship to be enjoyed.
* ‘Worker’ speaks of a job to be done.
* Soldier speaks about a battle to be fought.
* Your messenger speaks about Epaphroditus’ job description who brought financial support from the Philippians to Paul.

4-3, Why did Paul want to send him back to them? (26-30)

 ***For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. 29 So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.***

* He served with Paul, even though he was sick. He was distressed when he learned that the Philippians found out about his illness.
* Epaphroditus was concerned because the Philippians learned of his sickness and worried about him. The return of Epaphroditus would give them peace of mind that their valued brother was in good condition.
* When Paul sent him back, he asked them to welcome him in the Lord with great joy and to honor people like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ.
* Here we can find common denominators in these three exemplary men. They devoted themselves for the work of Christ at the risk of their lives.
* The ancient Greek phrase not regarding his life uses the vocabulary of gamblers that meant to risk everything on the roll of the dice. Paul wrote that for the sake of Jesus Christ, Epaphroditus was willing to gamble everything.
* In the days of the Early Church, when a plague struck the city, many threw the dead bodies into the streets and fled in terror. But the ‘gamblers’ buried the dead and helped the sick the best they could, and so risked their lives to show the love of Jesus. We are all Christ’s gamblers, risking our lives for the sake of Christ!

4-4, How did Epaphroditus reflect the character of Christ?

* They (Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus) were Christ-centered and genuinely concerned about others. When they followed Christ’s example, they became model Christians.
* They show us practically what it’s like to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. We need these kinds of examples. There are many among us. We should honor people like them and learn from them.

**Conclusion**

 

 Today we learned that as God’s people we are to continue to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, realizing that God works in us to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. May God help us to grow as shining stars in this dark generation by holding firmly to the word of life.

**One word: Work out our salvation!**