

## Introduction

Last week I mentioned to you two ways of trying to motivate children to obey. Method number one is the threat of a rod. Paul used this method with the Corinthian church. In chapter three, Paul speaks about the strife that was going on, and in chapter four he says, “What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness? That was method number one. A second method is more positive and focuses on trying to create an inward desire to obey.

There was also strife and a lack of unity in Philippi. Paul used method number two with the Philippians. Last week we looked at how Paul made a plea to them about unity. He tells them all the things that God does for them, and as a result of that, they should work hard on becoming of one mind, united in spirit, and intent on one purpose. That one purpose is to strive and contend for the faith of the gospel.

(Phil 2:1-2a) Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, {2} make my joy complete...

Why did Paul use Method # 2 with the Philippians. We will find out in just a minute why he decided to use the softer method with them. Our text today is Philippians 2:12-18. Let’s read it.

(Phil 2:12-18) So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; {13} for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. {14} Do all things without grumbling or disputing; {15} so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, {16} holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. {17} But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. {18} You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

This morning we are going to look at how to work out salvation. Paul gives four ways for the Philippians to work it out: 1) with fear and trembling; 2) without grumbling or disputing; 3) holding fast the word of life.

### 1. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Paul begins with “so then.” He is referring to all the things that we covered last week on unity. He has made a plea for unity. He has given them four characteristics of unity. He also told them the key to having unity, having the attitude of Christ. What was Christ’s attitude? Jesus did nothing from selfishness. He was not looking out for His own interests, but our interests. Christ humbled Himself and became a bond-servant. He did not grasp for position, but came to serve. As a result of humbling Himself, the Father exalted Him to the highest place. So then, since we are to have the attitude of Christ and humble ourselves, Paul wants us to then work out our salvation.

(Phil 2:12a) So then...

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I mentioned earlier that I would mention why Paul used method number two with the Philippians. Method one would have been to threaten to come to them with a rod, like he did with the Corinthians. Instead, he pleads with them to have unity. Notice what Paul says in verse twelve. He says, “just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.” The Philippians were soft-hearted, not stiff-necked. They had always obeyed Paul. There was no hint of disobedience. **Paul used a gentler method because the Philippians were obedient.**

(Phil 2:12) So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;

Hebrews 13:17 tells us to obey your leaders and submit to them. It says to let them give account with joy, and not with grief. The Philippians were obedient. The Philippians were submissive. And, Paul prays with joy for the Philippians. His oversight to them has been a joyful experience.

(Heb 13:17) Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

Paul tells the Philippians to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. This verse has caused much debate and controversy in the church. One of the controversies has been over the idea of working for your salvation. I want to clear up some of the confusion.

(Phil 2:12b) ...work out your salvation with fear and trembling;

The Scriptures are very clear that we do not work to earn our salvation. **We cannot earn our salvation with good works.** Paul tells us in Ephesians 2 that we are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Salvation is not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

(Eph 2:8-9) For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

In Titus 3, Paul says the same thing, only worded differently. He said that God saved us, not on the basis of deeds which have been done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

(Titus 3:5) He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

So, Paul is not telling people to earn their salvation by works. He is telling people that they need to work out this salvation that Christ has given to us. We have a part to play. God does not transform our lives independently of us. **God is at work in us, but we have a part to play in becoming conformed to His image.**

Another controversy has to do with two different groups and the teachings of men. One group is known as the Pietists, and the other group is known as the Quietists. The Pietist believe that we must apply much effort to our faith and work out our salvation. Man has a big responsibility and role to play.

The Quietists say that God saves us, and it is He who is conforming us to His will. “They believe that in effect the Christian is quiet in the process of spiritual growth. He provides, or she provides basically no energy to the process whatsoever and that the key is surrender, yield, die to self, mortify oneself, put your life on the altar. That we basically do absolutely nothing, it's all of God.”<sup>1</sup> The Quietists look at the next verse, Philippians 2:13. Paul continues, “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” The Quietists say that it is God who is at work. We cannot add anything to His work.

(Phil 2:13) for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

One of the problems that I have with some systematic theology is the attempt to put all the Scriptures together in a way that makes complete sense to us. We make a theological box, and we put God in that box. We make all the Scriptures say what we want them to say so they fit our doctrine. The Armenians do this. The Calvinists do this. The Pietists do this. The Quietists do this.

Instead, we must let the Scriptures speak for themselves. If we do not understand the Scriptures, we must humbly confess our lack of understanding. But, I do not think we have the right to twist and contort Scriptures to make them say what we want to say. We also do not have the license to disregard the Scriptures that do not support our own teachings, the teachings of men. Many times there is a tension in the Scriptures. We like to make it one way or the other, when it appears that both may be right. I look forward to when the perfect comes so that we will know fully.

The truth is that it is God who is at work in us. But, we have a part to play. We co-labor with God. We co-operate with God. We have responsibilities in our relationship with God. Take our quiet times with God. He does not set your alarm clock. He does not make you get up. He does not make you read your Bible. He does not make you get on your knees and pray. He does not make you worship. You and I must discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness.

Peter talks about growing in Christ. He tells us to put aside all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander. These are things that we must do. God does not do that for us. Then, he tells us to long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it we may grow in respect to our salvation. If you and I do not make time to read and study the word, we will not grow. We must put off these bad things and then feed on the word of God if we want to grow in respect to our salvation.

(1 Peter 2:1-3) Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, {2} like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, {3} if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

In addition to our own efforts, **the leaders in a church also have a part to play in our spiritual growth.** They help us work out our salvation. Paul wrote the Galatians and told them, “my children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you.” Paul wanted to see them grow in respect to their salvation. He says he is in labor for that to happen. The Greek word is *odino*, which means birth pangs.

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<sup>1</sup>John MacArthur, Philippians 2:12, Part II, [www.gty.org](http://www.gty.org)

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(Gal 4:19) My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—

In Colossians, which we will be studying the second half of this year, Paul says that he is proclaiming Christ, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom. Why? Because he wants to present every man complete or mature in Christ. What kind of effort is Paul putting forth? He says that he is laboring and striving according to God's power. The Greek word he uses for labor is *kopiaio*, which means to grow weary or toil. Paul is wearying himself trying to help them grow in their faith. Next, he says he is striving. The word striving is *agonizomai*, which means to contend or struggle for a prize. We get our English word agony from it. Paul was working and striving to the point of weariness and agony in trying to help them become complete in Christ. Paul was trying to help them work out their salvation, and he was putting out quite a lot of effort.

(Col 1:28-29) We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. {29} For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

Paul tells them to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. This speaks of the fear of the Lord. It is God who is wanting this work done in us. It is God that is wanting us to come to unity. It is God who wants us to humble ourselves and to think of others as more important than ourselves. It is God who wants us to be of one mind and to have unity. If we do not cooperate with God, we will have to answer to Him, because this is His work. We are not to interfere with what God is trying to accomplish in our lives. Therefore, we are to recognize that this is a work of God and we should have a fear of the Lord.

(Phil 2:12-13) work out your salvation with fear and trembling; {13} for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Perhaps Peter says it even better. He said that God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. The word for opposed in the Greek is *antitasso*. *Tasso* means to be properly arranged or in order. The word for submission is *hupotasso*, which means under proper order and arrangement. The prefix *anti* means against. Peter is saying that God is standing in opposition to the proud like the military arranged for battle. He tells the younger men to submit to the elders, for God is opposed or *antitasso* to the proud. **We should humble ourselves because God is opposed to the proud.** It is no wonder that Paul tells us to humble ourselves and work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

(1 Peter 5:5) You younger men, likewise, be subject (*hupotasso*) to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED (*antitasso*) TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

Peter is not alone. Both Peter and James are quoting from Psalm 138:6, where David says that the Lord knows the proud from afar.

(James 4:6) But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

(Psalm 138:6) For though the LORD is exalted, Yet He regards the lowly, But the haughty He knows from afar.

When you see all caps in your Bible, it means something. In this case, it means that it is a quote from the Old Testament. Many of our Bibles have cross references in the margins, and will give you the actual verse that is being quoted. I encourage you to look up the cross references when you are reading and studying your Bible. You will gain more understanding. **Looking up cross references and doing word studies flavor our spiritual food.** Jeremiah says “Thy words were found and I ate them, and they became for me a joy and the delight of my heart.” When I eat, I like seasoned food, rather than bland food. This is the culinary tip of the week.

(Jer 15:16) Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.

Back to our text, Paul has told them to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. In Acts 4-5, there was great unity in the church. Because of that unity, there were great signs and wonders happening. People were getting saved and healed. It was a wonderful chapter for those in Jerusalem. However, something threatened the unity of the church. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Lord about the money they were giving from the sale of some property. It costs both of them their lives. Luke records that a great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.

(Acts 5:11) And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.

God was wanting unity. He wants unity today. We need to be careful about doing things that stir up strife. We need to be careful about the way we treat one another. We need to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

## **2. Work out your salvation without grumbling or disputing.**

The second way that Paul tells us to work out our salvation is to do all things without grumbling or disputing. For those with teenagers, that also includes rolling the eyes and rocking the head back when asked to do something. The Greek word is *goggusmos*, and it is used four times in the New Testament. It is translated as grumbling twice and complaint two times. The word means to murmur or mutter.

(Phil 2:14) Do all things without grumbling or disputing;

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul speaks about the mistakes that Israel made. He starts by saying that he does not want us to be unaware of our fathers and their lives. In verse five, he says that God was not well pleased with most of them, and how they were laid low in the wilderness. In verse six he says that these things happened as examples for us. In other words, **God wants us to learn from the mistakes of our forefathers.** In verse seven, Paul speaks about their idolatry. In verse eight, he addresses their immorality, and how twenty-three thousand died in one day. In verse nine, he speaks about how they tried the Lord, and how they were destroyed by serpents. In verse ten, he speaks about how they **grumbled**, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Then, Paul re-iterates that these things happened as examples for us. They were written for our instruction. In verse ten, when he speaks about their grumbling, it is the same Greek word, *goggusmos*, that is used in Philippians.

(1 Cor 10:1-11) For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; {2} and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and

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in the sea; {3} and all ate the same spiritual food; {4} and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. {5} Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. {6} Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. {7} Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY." {8} Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. {9} Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. {10} Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. {11} Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

What were the people grumbling or complaining about? It was their leadership. They were grumbling about Moses and Aaron. There is some truth in what they were saying. The buck has to stop somewhere. When a team does not perform well, it is the coach that gets the axe. Therefore, it was easy for the sons of Israel to blame Moses and Aaron. However, in this case, Moses and Aaron were not at fault. They had done everything the Lord had asked them to do. People had died in the wilderness because of their sins. Sometimes, we need to look in the mirror instead of looking for someone else to blame.

(Num 16:41) But on the next day all the congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You are the ones who have caused the death of the LORD'S people."

If the leadership is not doing something the way that you feel it should be done, what should you do? Should you grumble and complain? No. Should you gossip and slander the leadership? No. Should you argue with them and dispute their words? No. Paul said do work out our salvation without grumbling or disputing? What should we do when we don't think things are going right? Here are some practical suggestions.

You should pray for your leadership. You should go and speak with the leadership. You should volunteer to help them solve the issues. When you go and speak with the leadership, you should have already thought through two or three different solutions to the problem. Learn to be a problem solver rather than a fault finder.

God did not take kindly to their grumbling in the Old Testament. And our God, who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, does not like it anymore today than back then. Our God, who disciplined the children of Israel for grumbling, will also discipline those in the New Testament who grumble. God would rather have us learn the lessons that have been written for our instruction, and learn from them, rather than learn the lessons first hand. God wants us to learn to do things without grumbling or complaining. **God will discipline those who grumble and complain.**

Another place that goggusmos is used is in 1 Peter 4:9. Peter tells us to be hospitable to one another without complaint or goggusmos. We are not to murmur, mutter, or complain about be hospitable to one another. The word for hospitable is philoxenos, which literally means lover of strangers. In the context that he is using it though, the believers were to be hospitable to one another.

(1 Peter 4:9) Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

One of the things that the early church was doing in Acts was breaking bread from house to house and taking their meals together. There is something about taking meals together. There are bonds that are formed. There are relationships that are developed. Sunday mornings are wonderful, but the deeper sharing with one another happens in small groups and around the dinner table. I want to strongly encourage all of us at EMV to begin inviting singles over for lunch or dinner. I want to encourage all of us to invite other families over for meals. Let me encourage you to invite visitors over for a meal. God is wanting to build unity in this body. God is wanting to build us relationally. This is one of the things that the early church did, and it is still something God wants to do today.

(Acts 2:46) Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

Notice the attitude that the early church has about hospitality. They did not do it with grumbling or complaining. They took their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart. No matter what it is that we find ourselves having to do, God wants us to do it with gladness and sincerity of heart. He does not want us to work out our salvation without grumbling, complaining, or disputing. This is the second way that Paul encourages us to work out our salvation.

### **3. Work out your salvation holding fast the word of life.**

The third thing that Paul shares is that we are to work out our salvation by holding fast the word of life.

(Phil 2:16) holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

One of the signs of a believer is abiding in God's word. Jesus told us in John 8:31 that if we abide in His word, then we are truly disciples of His, and we shall know the truth, and the truth shall make us free. If we are going to work out our salvation, we must abide and hold fast the word of life.

(John 8:31-32) "Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; {32} and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.""

There are number of benefits from holding fast the word of life. Let me just share a few of those benefits with you.

**a. Word of God is important for our spiritual growth.** Karen shared a couple of weeks ago about how God wants us to grow and mature in our faith. One of the primary ways that we grow is by getting into God's word. I received Christ into my life in the summer of 1974. I was at a golf tournament in Duncan, Oklahoma and was by myself in my hotel room. I read a devotional about having the peace of God, and my heart was opened up to receiving the gospel. I got on my knees and asked Christ to come into my life. Unfortunately, I did not grow any that first year. I would say that my lifestyle did not honor or glorify God at all. But, the next summer, God put a leader in Campus Crusade in the dorm room next to me. He shared with me the importance of reading God's word every day, and I began to read it. I fell in love with God's word. It became a joy and the delight of my heart. In particular, I could not get enough of Proverbs. I would read about eight chapters a day.

And, guess what, my life began to change. I began to grow in respect to salvation. The word of God is important for our spiritual growth.

(1 Pet 2:2-3) "like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, {3} if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."

**b. Word of God is important for life.** We find in Deuteronomy 8:3 that the word of God is important for life. God let the children of Israel go hungry, and then He fed them with manna, which they did not know about. He did this so that they would learn that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from His mouth. We need the word of life because it is important for every area of our life. It is relevant and important for all areas of our lives.

(Deut 8:3) ""And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD."

**c. Word of God is important for success.** When God charged Joshua with leading the nation of Israel, He told him not to let the book of the law depart from his mouth, and to meditate on it day and night so that he would be careful to do everything that was written in it. Why? What were the benefits of doing this? The benefit would be that God would make us prosperous and successful. When the Designer gives an operating manual, we should take time to read it. God is the one who designed us. He knows what we need to be successful, and He has given it to us. It is His word of life, the Bible.

(Josh 1:8) ""This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."

**d. Word of God is important so we can learn to fear the Lord.** In Deuteronomy we find that by reading the word and observing or becoming doers of His word, we learn to fear the Lord. I do not think enough is said about the fear of the Lord. Earlier this year, the Lord spoke to me about doing a men's conference focused on the fear of the Lord. I will be getting with our new Men's Ministry leader and discussing it. But, let me just give you just a couple thoughts about the fear of the Lord. First, the fear of the Lord keeps us away from evil. Second, it is the beginning of wisdom.

(Deut 17:19) ""And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes,"

(Deuteronomy 4:10) ""Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'"

One of the things that the early church had was a fear of the Lord. It was not just something in the Old Testament. In the book of Acts, especially after the incident with Ananias and Sapphira, there was a great fear of the Lord. Consequently, there were many signs and wonders taking place, and multitudes of men and women were being added to the church.

(Acts 5:11-14) And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things. {12} At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. {13} But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. {14} And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number,

**e. Word of God is important for training in righteousness.** Paul tells us that the Scriptures are profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. The Scriptures help us stay on the path of life. When we get off the path, they correct us and help train us to stay on the path of righteousness. Paul concludes that the Scriptures help us become adequate and equipped for every good work.

(2 Timothy 3:16-17) "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; {17} that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

**f. Word of God is important to gain a proper perspective of our self.** Another reason that we need to hold fast to the Word of life is for proper perspective. When we look intently at the word of God, and become doers of the word, we have a better understanding of what we were before Christ, and who we are in Christ.

(James 1:21-25) "Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. {22} But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. {23} For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; {24} for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. {25} But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does."

I mentioned to you that after I received the Lord, I did not see any difference in my life that year. I did not know how selfish I was. The following year I began reading the Scriptures. I saw areas that needed to change. I saw the old things begin to pass away and new things come. I had a much better perspective of who I had been and who I was becoming. Looking intently at the word does that.

**g. Word of God is important for peace in our lives.** The Psalms tell us that those who love God's law, His Word of life have great peace and nothing causes them to stumble. I believe that the Word of God helps us to order our lives. The word of God helps us prioritize the important things in life. When our priorities are right, and our lives are in order, there is great peace.

(Psalms 119:165) "Those who love Thy law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble."

**h. Word of God is important for renewing our minds.** We looked at four ways to become more discerning a few weeks ago. God wants us to discern the things that are good and excellent. This comes through presenting ourselves to God and renewing our minds. To renew our minds we must fill our minds with the word of God. We must read, memorize, meditate, and study God's word.

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(Romans 12:2) "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

**i. Word of God is important to keep us from evil and sin.** In the Psalms we are told that by hiding or treasuring God's word in our heart, we stay away from sin. How do we treasure it in our heart? We memorize His word and meditate on it. It is so important to memorize God's word.

(Psalm 119:9-11) How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word....Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.

In Psalm 19, we find a similar thought. It says that God warns us through His word. It keeps us from presumptuous sins. It keeps sins from ruling over us. It helps us to be blameless.

(Psalms 19:11-13) "Moreover, by them Thy servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward. {12} Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. {13} Also keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression."

In our text today, Paul says the reason that he wants us to do all things without grumbling and complaining is that we will prove ourselves to be blameless and innocent. As we treasure God's word in our heart, it helps us to be blameless and innocent. It keeps us and protects us from sin. That is God's desire. He calls us saints or holy ones. We are to be above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. We are to be lights in a world that has much darkness.

(Phil 2:15) so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,

### Conclusion

Paul concludes his exhortation to the Philippians to work out their salvation with another personal plea, so that he will have reason to glory because he did not run or toil in vain. **Paul did not want his labor to be in vain.**

(Phil 2:16) holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul tells how **every work of God is tested with fire**. The fires test the quality of each man's work. If any work remains, there is a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss. Paul is encouraging the Philippians to work out their salvation so that his work will remain, and he will have reason to glory.

(1 Cor 3:13-15) each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. {14} If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. {15} If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

## 07 Work Out Your Salvation (Philippians 2:12-18)

Last month, Karen and I were having a talk with John Dean. He spoke with us about churches being tested with fire. He said that there use to be a long gap between blessings and testings. He said that it appears that the time between blessings and testings are getting shorter. He thinks it has to do with the end times.

Our work at EMV is being tested. These are not major tests, but we have been tested. We are coming out of a winter season and into a spring season. The spring is a time to see new growth. I believe the growth is coming, but we have not seen much lately. That is a test of our endurance. That is a test of our commitment. That is a test of our faith.

Let me encourage you with two verses that stood out this week. **Paul encouraged the Galatians not to lose heart in doing good, or to grow weary. He said that they would reap in due time.** It is easy to grow weary in a church plant. There are not enough workers for the nursery. There are not enough people who can lead worship. There are not enough people to give breaks, and it is easy to grow weary. Let me encourage you to press on in doing good.

(Gal 6:9) Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

How can we avoid losing heart and growing weary? Here are some practical suggestions:

1. We should regularly share testimonies. Testimonies encourage us. They help us not to lose heart. It is good for us to hear and see how God is using our body.
2. We should regularly cast vision. Many people struggle with exercise because they do not have vision. If you have a goal, it is easy to stay disciplined. Proverbs tells us that without vision, people perish. The actual Hebrew rendering is that they live unrestrained, or undisciplined. We need to regularly cast vision.

(Pro 29:18) Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, But happy is he who keeps the law.

3. We need to build teams. Teamwork is vital for a number of reasons. First, sharing the work load makes it less wearisome. Doing everything yourself will burn you out. Teamwork is important for protection. Teamwork is important for encouragement. The Biblical pattern is teamwork, and that also goes for leadership. Paul wrote to the elders and deacons. Both leadership teams were plural. It is good to let others lead. It is good for them, and the break is good for you.

I have tried to schedule someone else to preach at least once a month. If I could preach 2-3 times a month, I think that would be plenty. I think it is healthy for the body, and it is healthy for me. The Lord gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the equipping of the saints. He did not just one gifting to do all the equipping.

4. We need to take time to seek the Lord. In Isaiah 40, we find a passage on weariness. **First**, he tells us that the Lord does not grow weary or tired. **Second**, he tells us that God gives strength to the weary. He is source of strength. He is the re-supplier of our strength. **Third**, he tells us that those who wait on the Lord will gain new strength. Our job is to wait on Him and seek Him.

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(Isaiah 40:28-31) Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. {29} He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power. {30} Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, {31} Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.

5. We need to balance our work life, personal life, ministry, recreation, and rest. We cannot copy one another. Each of us are built differently. But, we all need to have balance. Sometimes, we need to get away for a vacation and break. That is okay. We cannot keep burning it at both ends. We are in this for the long term. It is a marathon, not a sprint.

Another verse that came to me this week for our body is out of 1 Corinthians 15:58. Paul tells the Corinthians to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that their toil is not in vain in the Lord. I will say the same thing to all of you. Continue being steadfast and faithful. Keep abounding in the work of the Lord. Our toil at EMV is not in vain in the Lord. Lives are being changed. People are growing in their faith. There will be rewards for your labor.

(1 Cor 15:58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

Finally, Paul says that he rejoices and shares his joy with them. He urges the Philippians to rejoice and to share their joy with him. God wants us to rejoice with one another.

(Phil 2:17-18) But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. {18} You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

Let's pray.

**Introduction** (Phil 2:1-2a, 12-18)**1. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.** (Phil 2:12-18)

- Paul used the gentler method because the Philippians were \_\_\_\_\_ . (Heb 13:17)
- We cannot \_\_\_\_\_ our salvation with good works. (Eph 2:8-9, Tit 3:5)
- God is at work in us, but we also have a part to play in becoming \_\_\_\_\_ to His image. (Phil 2:13, 1 Pet 2:1-3)
- The leaders in a church also have a part to play in our \_\_\_\_\_ . (Gal 4:19, Col 1:28-29)
- We should humble ourselves because God is \_\_\_\_\_ to the proud. (1 Pet 5:5, James 4:6, Psa 138:6, Acts 5:11)
- Looking up cross references and doing word studies \_\_\_\_\_ our spiritual food. (Jer 15:16)

**2. Work out your salvation without grumbling or disputing.** (Phil 2:14, 1 Pet 4:9, Acts 2:46)

- God wants us to \_\_\_\_\_ from the mistakes of our forefathers. (1 Cor 10:1-13, Num 16:41)
- God will \_\_\_\_\_ those who grumble and complain.

**3. Work out your salvation holding fast the word of life.** (Phil 2:16, John 8:31-32)

- a. The Word of God is important for our spiritual \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Pet 2:2-3)
- b. The Word of God is important for \_\_\_\_\_. (Deut 8:3)
- c. The Word of God is important for \_\_\_\_\_. (Josh 1:8)
- d. The Word of God is important so we can learn to \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord. (Deut 17:19, 4:10, Acts 5:11-14)
- e. The Word of God is important for \_\_\_\_\_ in righteousness. (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- f. The Word of God is important to gain a proper \_\_\_\_\_ of our self. (James 1:21-25)
- g. The Word of God is important for \_\_\_\_\_ in our lives. (Psa 119:165)
- h. The Word of God is important for \_\_\_\_\_ our minds. (Rom 12:1-2)
- i. The Word of God is important to \_\_\_\_\_ from evil and sin. (Psa 119:9-11, 19:11-13, Phil 2:15)

**Conclusion** (Phil 2:16)

1. Paul did not want his labor to be in \_\_\_\_\_. (Phil 2:16)
2. Every work of God is \_\_\_\_\_ with fire. (1 Cor 3:13-15)
3. Paul encouraged the Galatians not to lose \_\_\_\_\_ in doing good, or to grow

\_\_\_\_\_. They would \_\_\_\_\_ in due time. (Gal 6:9, 1 Cor 15:58)

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