

*Philippians 2:12-18*

*Verse 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; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*

**12. Keep in mind that verse 12 follows verse 1-11 which spoke of Christ's willingness to pour Himself out for us, to humble Himself to the point of the cross.**

- a. **"So then"** is **hōste**: so too, that is, thus therefore (in various relations of consecution, as shown): - (insomuch) as, so that (then), (insomuch) that, therefore, to, wherefore.

*The "so then" 7 with which this sentence begins indicates that he is about to apply the appeal of 1: 27-2: 5, now by way of vv. 6-11, to the case specific situation of the believing community in Philippi . What follows this imperative (in vv. 14-16) makes that certain.-Fee*

- b. **"Obeyed"** is **hupakouo**: to hear under (as a subordinate), that is, to listen attentively; by implication to heed or conform to a command or authority: - hearken, be obedient to, obey. The Philippians always listened attentively and heeded Paul's instruction.

*At issue is "obedience," pure and simple, which in this case is defined as their "working or carrying out in their corporate life the salvation that God has graciously given them.-Fee*

**"Work out"** is **katergazomai**: to work fully, that is, accomplish; by implication to finish. Paul is not talking about the Philippians somehow accomplishing or putting the finishing touches on their salvation. Rather, he is speaking of working out what they already had.

*Picking up the word "salvation" from 1: 28, he urges that they flesh it out in their life together in Philippi.-Fee*

*This is the heavenly love with which the great apostle loved the Philippians. He commends them for their constant obedience. Then he exhorts them to work out their own salvation. Let us be clear first of all as to what this exhortation does not mean. It does not mean to work for one's salvation, and for two reasons; first, Paul was writing to those who were already saved, and second, **salvation is not a work of man for God, but a work of God for man, a work that was accomplished at the Cross.-Wuest***

- c. In the context of Paul's exhortation to walk in humility with each other, Paul is more likely referring to the Philippians allowing this salvation to affect how they relate to each other.

*The context makes it clear that this is not a soteriological text per se, dealing with "people getting saved" or "saved people persevering." Rather it is an ethical text, dealing with "how saved people live out their salvation" in the context of the believing community and the world.-Fee*

*Thus everything about the sentence and its context indicates that Paul with this imperative is not referring to the "salvation" of individual believers, but the salvation that God has wrought in making them a people of God for his name in Philippi, and that at issue is their getting on with it.-Fee*

**d. Fear and trembling**

**a. Fear and trembling can't mean to be afraid of God.**

**Romans 8:15**

*For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"*

*In the LXX it is used primarily of the dread that pagans experience at the presence of the living God (e.g., Exod 15: 16; Isa 19: 16), which then is transferred to their dread of his people because of the wonders God performs for them (Deut 2: 25; 11: 25);-Fee*

**Exodus 15:16**

*All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.*

*16 "Terror and dread fall upon them;*

*By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone;*

*Until Your people pass over, O Lord, Until the people pass over whom You have purchased.*

**Deuteronomy 2:25**

*This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the peoples everywhere under the heavens, who, when they hear the report of you, will tremble and be in anguish because of you.'*

**Jeremiah 33:8-8**

*I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me. 9 It will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for them, and they will fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace that I make for it.'*

*Fear and trembling was a common phrase which did not mean to walk in terror of God. In 2 Cor 7:15 Paul uses this term to show how the Corinthians treated Titus with respect. 15 His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.-Fee*

**13. Verse 13 is the "how to" of verse 12. Yes, we are to live out the salvation that we've been given, but how? God, who saved us, also enables us in two amazing ways.**

**a. First of all, God gives us the DESIRE to please Him.**

**b. Secondly, God gives us the ABILITY to DO what pleases Him.**

*Paul's real point, therefore, is not to protect himself theologically, but to encourage the Philippians that God is on the side of his people, that he not only has their concern at heart, but actively works in their behalf for the sake of his own good pleasure. -Fee*

*This is fully in keeping with Paul's understanding of Christian ethics, which has not to do with obedience to a set of rules that regulate conduct, but first of all with a "mind that is transformed". -Fee*

*God's pleasure is pure love, so what he does "for the sake of his good pleasure" is by that very fact also on behalf of those he loves. After all, it delights God to delight his people. -Fee*

- c. It almost seems like He's gone too far. Truly God is demonstrating here what one might call "hyper-grace"! Wasn't it enough that He humbled Himself to the point of the cross? What amazing grace that goes with us into living out our salvation that he would give us both divine DESIRE and divine ABILITY to please Him.

### *Verses 14-15*

*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,*

14. This command from Paul is not sitting here alone. It is all connected. Do ALL things without grumbling or disputing. Why? It's because of what He's done.

- a. "Grumbling" is goggusmo: a grumbling: - grudging, murmuring

*The word "murmurings" is the translation of a Greek word which means, "to mutter, to murmur." It was used of the cooing of doves. It is an onomatopoeic word, that is, a word whose sound resembles its meaning. It is spelled, gongusmon. It refers, not to a loud outspoken dissatisfaction, but to that undertone murmuring which one sometimes hears in the lobbies of our present day churches where certain cliques are "having it out," so to speak, among themselves. The word refers to the act of murmuring against men, not God. The use of this word shows that the divisions among the Philippians had not yet risen to the point of loud dissension. The word was used of those who confer secretly, of those who discontentedly complain. -Wuest*

- b. "Disputing" is dialogismos: discussion, that is, (internal) consideration (by implication purpose), or (external) debate: - dispute, doubtful (-ing), imagination, reasoning, thought. This word is almost always used in a negative context in the New Testament. Here are a few examples.

#### **Matthew 15:19**

*For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.*

#### **Luke 24:38**

*And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do **doubts** arise in your hearts?"*

**Romans 1:21**

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

**1 Corinthians 3:20**

And again, "THE LORD KNOWS THE **reasonings** of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS."

**1 Timothy 2:8**

Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.

*The word "disputings" is the translation of a Greek word that carries the ideas of discussion or debate, with the underthought of suspicion or doubt. The murmurings led to disputes. -Wuest*

15. By not murmuring and disputing with other saints, you prove to others that you are who God already made you, blameless and innocent children of God.
  - a. "Appear as lights in the world", Paul is loosely quoting from Daniel 12:3 3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.
  - b. As we live out knowing that Jesus is our wisdom, 1Cor. 1:30-31, and as we lead others to the gift of righteousness, we will shine in this world.

*Verse 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.*

16. What is "the word of life"? It is the gospel. We are told hold fast to it (don't let go of it).
  - c. "Holding fast" is *epechō*: to hold upon, that is, (by implication) to retain; (by extension) to detain; to pay attention to: - give (take) heed unto, hold forth, mark, stay.
  - d. Some translations use "showing forth" and some commentators say this refers to sharing the gospel with unbelievers. But the other uses of "epecho" are about paying attention to and holding onto.

*But what suggests evangelism as the ultimate intent of their "holding firm" the gospel is (a) the word order ("the word of life holding firm," immediately following "in the world"); (b) the unique language for the gospel, "word of life," which occurs only here in Paul, and makes very little sense if does not carry the thrust of bringing life to others; and (c) the context of Dan 12: 3, in which the second line in the Hebrew reads: "and those who bring many to righteousness (shall shine) as the stars for ever and ever."-Fee*

- e. "The word of life" we hold upon, that we pay attention to, retain, and that we stay in is the truth of the gospel of God's grace and love to us. It is so easy to lose sight of it, but we are told to hold on and retain, even detain it.
- f. To Paul, if the Philippians did not hold tightly onto the word of life, it would be as if he had toiled in vain and he would have no reason to glory about them before God. You might think of it like this. A parent spends a lifetime investing into their child, not only money but time and love. Sometimes a child then chooses to

live as if these labors of love never happened, and a parents can begin to feel as if their labor of love was for nothing. They have no reason to glory, to feel joy, because of the child. Paul saw the Philippians as his beloved children. He led them to Jesus. He lovingly nurtured them. If they did not hold on to what he had taught them, from his perspective, it would mean his service to them was a waste of his efforts and love.

**1 Thessalonians 2:19**

*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?*

*He will reserve his "glorying" for the day when it counts, when they, along with others, become his "crown of boasting " (1 Thess 2: 19).-Fee*

*The final word, therefore, is not a word of doubt, 41 but an affirmation: by their heeding these words he will have plenty of cause for "boasting" when they stand together before Christ at his Parousia; indeed, they will be primary evidence that he had "neither run in vain nor labored in vain."-Fee*

**Verse 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.*

**17. Just as Jesus poured His life out for us, so Paul was pouring his life out for the Philippians. For him, this was a joyous not burdensome work.**

- a. **The Amplified puts it this way:** *Even if [my lifeblood] must be poured out as a libation on the sacrificial offering of your faith [to God], still I am glad [to do it] and congratulate you all on [your share in] it.*
- b. **Keep in mind, Paul was going to be tried and could have lost his life if found guilty (which he wasn't), but in view of Christ's suffering, he was also willing to suffer and be poured out for them.**

c. *The most likely option is that the metaphor refers to the present suffering (in his case, by imprisonment) mentioned in 1: 30. Thus he is suggesting that his imprisonment, besides being a "drink offering" to the Lord, is to be understood as his part of their common suffering, 61 the "drink offering" poured out in conjunction with 62 their "sacrifice."-Fee*

*Paul's present imprisonment serves as the "drink offering," which accompanies their own suffering in behalf of Christ.-Fee*

**d. Paul had this same love for all the churches even though they didn't necessarily respond as had the Philippians.**

**2 Corinthians 12:14-15** (Note: This is to a different audience.)

*Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. <sup>15</sup>And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.*

- e. Any suffering that Paul endured for the Philippians, any labor was done in love and joy for them.

*"I expect you to be my grounds for boasting at the Parousia, evidence that I have not labored in vain . (And presently my labor includes imprisonment, as yours does suffering in Philippi.) But if indeed my present struggle represents a kind of drink offering to go along with your own suffering on behalf of the gospel, then I rejoice over that."-Fee*

### Verse 18

*You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.*

- 18. Just as Paul rejoiced in the suffering he experienced on behalf of the gospel, he urged them to rejoice in the same way.**

*What Paul is emphasizing in each case is that, first, he and they rejoice on their own accounts for the privilege of serving the gospel, even in the midst of great adversity, and second that they do so mutually, as they have done so much else mutually.-Fee*

*Joy in suffering, it should finally be noted, is not "delight in feeling badly"; rather it is predicated on the unshakable foundation of the work of Christ, both past and future. Joy has nothing to do with circumstances, but everything to do with one's place in Christ.-Fee*