

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

June 5, 2024

Series - The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul

The Prison Epistles

The Letter to the Philippians – The Joy of Faith

Text - Philippians 2: 12 - 18 – *“Shining Brightly in a Dark World”*

Introduction

For the past several weeks, we have been studying Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, which was one of the letters written during his incarceration in Rome. We have discussed previously that the theme for this letter is joy and rejoicing. This is a very positive, a very encouraging letter. Paul had an awesome relationship with these folks.

Last time, our study brought us through the first eleven verses of chapter two. There we read the exhortation from the apostle Paul in verse 5, *“let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”*

We stated in our study that if we are to have the mind of Christ as a New Testament church then we would have to have:

- 1 Harmony – A Like Mind
- 2 Humility – A Lowly Mind
- 3 Concern for Humanity – A Loving Mind

Transition

In verses 12 – 18, Paul will show us how the mind of Christ can be displayed in the life of a believer, so that others can see it – like a bright light that shines in the darkness.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said:

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

Illustration

I once heard J. Vernon McGee, the radio preacher and one-time pastor of the Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles, California address this subject. During a question-and-answer session, a person asked if it was permissible for Christians to drink alcohol, or go to dances. He asked a question back to the caller: “Do you want to shine?” Because of grace, a Christian can do many things. God will not stop loving you, or revoke your

salvation because you drink, or smoke, or dance, or anything else; but will doing those things cause you to “*shine as lights in the world.*” Will the lost people around you see Christ in you when you are doing these things.

I. **The Principle – God is working in you and wants to flow through you. (vs. 12 – 13)**

We have already seen in this letter:

*"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work **in you** will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"* (Philippians 1:6)

*"Let this mind be **in you**, which was also in Christ Jesus:"* (Philippians 2:5)

Look at verses 12 and 13:

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."
(Philippians 2:12-13)

Note – the phrase “work **out** your own salvation” does not mean, “work **for** your own salvation.” Salvation is not earned through works; it is a gift received by faith:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The phrase “work out your own salvation” is explained in v. 13. God is in you and wants to work out of you. It has the idea of getting the most out of your salvation – using it to the fullest.

We just quoted Ephesians 2:8 and 9, but notice what God says in verse 10:

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)

God is working in us. He is influencing our will to do His good pleasure.

How does God work in us?

A. Through His Spirit

"For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." (Matthew 10:20)

"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:17)

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Romans 8:9)

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Romans 8:11)

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16)

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19)

When you were saved, the Spirit of God sealed you, and now dwells in you. He is the reason that you are a "new creature," and the reason that you have a new nature.

B. Through the Scriptures

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:7)

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Colossians 3:16)

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

Since God uses the Scriptures to work in us, shouldn't we spend as much time as we can reading and studying the Scriptures? Just a thought.

C. Through Our Suffering

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:" (1 Peter 1:6 & 7)

Illustration - Ron Hamilton – “Patch the Pirate” penned these words in his song, “Rejoice in the Lord”:

*God never moves without purpose or plan
When trying His servant or molding a man.
Give thanks to the Lord though your testing seems long
In darkness He giveth a song.
Oh, rejoice in the Lord
He makes no mistakes
He knoweth the end of each path that I take
For when I am tried and purified
I shall come forth as gold.*

The third stanza says:

*Now, I can see testing comes from above
God strengthens His children and purges in love.
My Father knows best and I trust in His care
Through purging, more fruit I will bear.*

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

God is working in you, if you are saved.

II. The Practice (vs. 14 – 16)

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." (Philippians 2:14-16)

How are we going to work out our salvation?

How are we going to let the mind of Christ flow through us?

A. Stop Murmuring

Stop whining and complaining.

God killed more people in the Old Testament for complaining than anything else. When we complain, we are revealing our Adamic nature, our old man, but we are not revealing Christ's light.

Here's a thought – instead of complaining, why not express thanksgiving and appreciation. Instead of complaining, why not be a source of encouragement.

B. Stop Fighting

Arguing, bickering – this speaks of the harmony that we spoke of in the last message – “one accord”, “one mind”, “striving together”.

The flesh insists upon having its way, but the Spirit-filled Christian is willing to yield to the wishes of others to advance the cause of Christ.

Here's a thought – why not work in support of those you are working with to help them to achieve the goal.

Swallow your pride and let somebody else take the lead.

C. Start Shining the Light of God's Word

- 1 By Your Spirit – filled Life
- 2 By Your Love for Others
- 3 By Your Loyalty to the Truth of God's Word

We are to learn the Word of God, then live the word of God before others, and finally we are to love others by communicating to them the principles that we learn from the Word of God.

III. The Product – (vs. 16b – 18)

If we allow God to work in us and through us, we will be a source of joy, not only to ourselves, but to others as well.

"Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me." (Philippians 2:16-18)

We can rejoice together knowing that we are fulfilling God's will for our lives. When Christ is allowed to come out, the result is joy.