

Introduction: In anticipation of returning to sermons on the book of Philippians after Easter, we remind ourselves of the two-fold purpose of this book by alternating Bible notes in Philippians with those from John's Gospel.

Turning to Philippians this week, we see first of all how Paul highlights his gratitude to this church for their spiritual and material support of his ministry. They were one of the first in Macedonia to send money to help Paul be able to preach the Gospel full-time. They continue to show Christ-like generosity to the famine-stricken church in Jerusalem, helping Paul gather the offering which he would eventually take to Jerusalem himself – as proof of the Gentile churches' love for the Christians in Judea. What a joyful privilege for Paul, then, to write this Letter to the Philippians to express his gratitude to them for their support – see Philippians 1:5 & 4:10-15.

But the second burden Paul has for the Philippians must have been one that weighed on him in terms of pastoral concern for their spiritual unity as a church. In part due to the bad example of two contentious, prominent church members, (Phil. 4:2), there was the temptation that the Philippians would splinter because of those driven by selfishness instead of servanthood. They had to be reminded of the mind of Christ which they possessed by faith – that they were to imitate Him in putting the interests of others before their own (Phil. 2:1-5). Clearly the Philippians had a struggle lying before them – to fight against the enemies of pre-eminence and pride *within*, as well as fighting against enemies of the Gospel from *without*. May we gather strength as we see the Apostle Paul manfully help them (and us) in these struggles.

**Monday: read Philippians 1:27-2:11.** The basic imperative Paul places before the Philippians is that they must by faith, “stand in one spirit and contend as one man for the faith” - against a hostile world (Phil. 1:27); against those who would oppose their Christian life and profession (Phil. 1:28) and against those who would cause them to suffer because of their faith in Christ (Phil. 1:29). In such a struggle, they shared in the Apostle's suffering persecution for Jesus' sake, (Phil. 1:30). How would they stand courageously for Christ in the face of such pressures? The answer is that they are to heed the example of Christ in *His willingness to humble Himself by taking the form of a servant*. From this example Paul argues in Philippians 2:1-5 that they should in like manner adopt a servant attitude towards each other:

*Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. (NIV)*

Meditate and Pray: What a sermon illustration! We are to humble ourselves in our relationships in the church because of Christ's example of humbling Himself even to the point of death! But alas, how hard this is for us! Let us flee to God in prayer right now, since we in our own strength cannot take one step in imitating Christ as we ought. Let us pray:

“Great God in Heaven, we thank you that you humbled yourself as our Father to give up your Son for our salvation! What a lowering of yourself as our Father: You came down from your Throne, rolled up your sleeves and created a body for your Son, in the womb of the Virgin! You then commanded your Son in our nature to be “about His Father's business”, learning continually about the necessity of the Cross!”

“Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you learned from your Father how to interpret your high station as God's Son – you became obedient to death to show us both your submission to your Father's will and your great love for sinners!”

“Thank you, Holy Spirit, that you can bring into our lives as born-again Christians that very same humble servanthood which the Son crafted in our nature! Please cause Christ’s graces, especially His humble obedience, to grow within us as a church family, that we truly might learn how to put the interests of others in the body of Christ before our own! Amen.”

**Tuesday: read Philippians 2:5-11.** What challenging words Paul writes beginning in Philippians 2:5. In fact, Paul was so concerned that the Philippians learn the key role of humility in their church’s life that he actually recites what scholars think is a hymn in Philippians 2:5-11. By this hymn, Paul knew he could move the Philippians to recall the extent of Christ’s humble obedience! Think of Philippians 2:5-11, again, and read it as a hymn this time:

*Your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus:*

*Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;  
rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.  
And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!  
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.*

Meditate and Pray: What is your experience when you hear the words of one of your favorite hymns? Should we not sing with all our hearts when the deepest truths about God are expressed for us in words familiar to us? May God cause the beautiful melody of Christ’s self-giving love to ring in our ears and lodge in our hearts!

**Wednesday: read Philippians 2:9-13.** Because of Christ’s obedience unto death, God the Father raised Him from the dead, proclaiming Him as the God-man, exalted above every other throne, principality and power! At the name of Jesus, every knee will indeed bow! He is Lord over all!

Because of Christ’s exalted Lordship, we are with holy fear to work out our salvation (Philippians 2:12). Just as Paul, when confronted with the blinding light of the glory of Christ in Acts 9:5, spoke with awe-struck reverence, “Who are you Lord?”, so at every moment of *our* lives, we are to ask the Lord: “What would you have me to do?” This is what it means to, “Work out our salvation with fear and trembling.”

Meditate and Pray: “Lord, please give us grace day by day to live *surrendered and consecrated lives*. May your Spirit, who is ever committed to bringing glory to your Son, work within us to create in us desires which focus on your glory, and the glory of your Son. Amen.” Sing about this Christ-glorifying mindset, which is content to take the lower place so that Christ can take the highest place, with words from hymn # 644:

*May the mind of Christ, my Savior,  
Live in me from day to day,*

*By His love and power controlling  
All I do and say.*

*May the Word of God dwell richly  
In my heart from hour to hour,*

*May the peace of God my Father  
Rule my life in everything,  
That I may be calm to comfort  
Sick and sorrowing.*

*So that all may see I triumph  
Only through His power.*

*May the love of Jesus fill me  
As the waters fill the sea;  
Him exalting, self abasing,  
This is victory.*

**Thursday: read Philippians 2:12-13.** This basic imperative for living reverent lives of holy endeavor in Philippians 2:12 is, in fact, a repeat of the earlier command in 1:27, that we are to, “Live a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ.” Paul speaks of the same ethical concern in both places – a fact proven by *the repetition of the idea*, “As you obey in my presence, so now much more in my absence.” Whether he is present or absent, he prays that the Philippians will live worthy of the Gospel as they work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

Meditate and Pray: “LORD God, teach us by the Spirit of your Son not to be “eye-servants” who only walk reverently before you when others are looking on – but let us serve you with holy fear, from the heart, *even when no one else sees*. Give us a gripping sense of your omniscient Lordship of our lives. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”

**Friday: read Philippians 2:12-13.** Alas for us, we must confess that we do not live as reverently as we ought, every moment of every day. We find ourselves so impotent when it comes to working out our salvation! But take heart – Paul gives us profound encouragement in verse 13, reminding us of the energetic indwelling of God within us! Here then is the greatest blessing of all, besides Christ’s atoning work at Calvary: that in the act of adopting us, God gives us a new nature and recreates us as His born-again children. He puts *a new spiritual power center within us* - by His Spirit indwelling us with the power to work out our salvation! This is surely one of the great doctrines of the Bible – God’s indwelling each of His people by His Spirit – as well as inhabiting His people’s corporate praises – Psalm 22:3! It is God *in us* that energizes our working *out* of our salvation! This is why the work which God has begun **in** us, (Phil. 1:6), will be carried out and completed on the Day of the Lord Christ’s Return!

Meditate and Pray: Sing about God’s determination, by His Spirit, to finish His work in us - even as Christ finished His atoning work for us on the Cross, using hymn # 463:

*A debtor to mercy alone,  
Of covenant mercy I sing;  
Nor fear, with Thy righteousness on,  
My person and offering to bring.  
The terrors of law and of God  
With me can have nothing to do;  
My Savior’s obedience and blood  
Hide all my transgressions from view.*

*The work which His goodness began,  
**The arm of His strength will complete;**  
His promise is Yea and Amen,  
And never was forfeited yet.  
Things future, nor things that are now,  
Nor all things below or above,  
Can make Him His purpose forgo,  
Or sever my soul from His love.*

**Sat/Sun: read Philippians 2:12-13 and Hebrews 12:1-3.** Philippians 2:12’s command to, “work out our salvation” is simply one of countless imperatives in the New Testament which exhort us to exert ourselves in the earnest labor of *working out by faith what God has worked into us by His Spirit*. The seed of new spiritual life, which God plants in us through the sovereign work of regeneration, must be by faith worked out in our

daily lives. In terms of Hebrews 12, we are to “run with endurance the race set before us”, seeking to jettison the sinful entanglements which hinder our running towards the goal.

Of course, such a running of the race of faith is so different from the Olympic picture of sleek athletes successfully straining every muscle, taking their beautiful and manicured bodies across the finish line, there to be received with adulation by their fans and pampered by their well-paid staff, who conveniently place within their grasp all the liquids and food needed to energize them for the next race. It is a far more bloody task to work out our salvation. There are scars which we carry with us from the spiritual surgeries which Christ our “Medic” performs on us on the battle-field where we fight the forces of sin and evil. There are constant stumblings, failures and even retreats into the places of spiritual refuge God provides for our weary bodies and souls.

Yet, through many such deaths and resurrections, Christ as our elder brother does carry us on by His Spirit, enabling the limbs of our Christian profession to keep moving. Moreover, there are witnesses, (according to Hebrews 12:1): those who have run the Christian race and gained the victor’s crown in Jesus – who line the way to cheer us on! So, don’t give up! God has begun this good work in you, (Philippians 1:6), and will continue to work in you, even as you by faith work out the spiritual principles and lessons which God implants in your soul!

Meditate and Pray: Let us close this week’s notes by singing about the crucial work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification which will enable us to bear the fruit of an active Christian life, “working out our salvation” in our daily lives, using hymn # 335:

*Gracious Spirit, dwell with me—  
I myself would gracious be,  
And with words that help and heal  
Would Thy life in mine reveal;  
And with actions bold and meek  
Would for Christ my Savior speak.*

*Tender Spirit, dwell with me—  
I myself would tender be;  
Shut my heart up like a flower  
In temptation’s darksome hour;  
Open it when shines the sun,  
And his love by fragrance own.*

*Mighty Spirit, dwell with me—  
I myself would mighty be;  
Mighty so as to prevail  
Where unaided man must fail;  
Ever by a mighty hope,  
Pressing on and bearing up.*

*Holy Spirit, dwell with me—  
I myself would holy be;  
Separate from sin, I would  
Choose and cherish all things good;*

*Truthful Spirit, dwell with me—  
I myself would truthful be;  
And with wisdom kind and clear  
Let Thy life in mine appear;  
And with actions brotherly  
Speak my Lord’s sincerity.*

*Silent Spirit, dwell with me—  
I myself would quiet be,  
Quiet as the growing blade  
Which through earth its way has made;  
Silently, like morning light,  
Putting mists and chills to flight.*

*And whatever I can be  
Give to Him who gave me Thee!*