

Living as Citizens of Heaven – Part 6

How We Are to Follow Jesus – Phil. 2:12-18

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – July 7th, 2024

Intro:

- Our passage this morning is built upon and flows from the humility and exaltation of Jesus as we continue to learn how we are to live as Christians, those who “follow Christ.” To be a Christian is to be found in Christ and to follow Christ, plain and simple.
- Paul gives us instructions as to *how* we are to follow Christ. Please open your Bible to Philippians chapter two, starting with verse twelve, where we will see the first thing we are to do and how we are to do it.

Continue to work out your salvation

Phil 2:12-13 NIV

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.

- These short verses are packed with a ton of significant theology. The first thing we are to notice and understand is the word “therefore.” These verses are built upon and flow from what was written just before. And what was just before this passage is the example of Jesus Christ that we are to follow, that we are to have the same “mindset” of Jesus Christ. We are to “*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*” (Phil 2:3-4). We are to humble ourselves, and God is the one who will recognize and reward us. The pathway of Jesus is to be our pathway. His way of walking is to be our way of walking.
- We are to always obey, but who are we obeying? We are obeying God our Father, just like Jesus, who was obedient in His living and in His dying (Phil. 2:8). Jesus was obedient to the will of the Father through following the word of God. This is the “obedience of faith” that is in our mission statement for this church (Romans 1:5). We (Crosspoint) exist “to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of His name among all the nations.” This obedience to God is because of – a result of – a fruit of – evidence of – our faith in Christ. There is an interlocking connection between believing and obeying. Listen to what Jesus taught:

John 3:36 ESV

Whoever *believes* in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not *obey* the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

- Paul echoes the same:

2 Thess 1:7-8 ESV

The Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels **8 in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those *who do not know God* and on those *who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus*.**

- There is and must be a believing and conceiving – a reception and production – a root and a fruit. One cannot and will not have one without the other. They are inexorably linked. This is

how we are to “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” It is vital for you to understand that you are not working *for* your salvation but working *out* your salvation. Our salvation is based on what Jesus has done for us (Phil. 2:5-11), and it is evidenced by our partnership in what Jesus is doing through us (Phil. 2:12-13).

- Paul explains it in his letter to the Ephesians this way:

Eph 2:8-10 ESV

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- This is the illustrated meaning and teaching of Jesus in the “vine and the branches” (John 15:1-10). We are to “abide” in Him, and then from this “abiding,” we are to be “producing” fruit. Being connected to Christ is the only way we can produce fruit. This is why, in Philippians 13, Paul states, “**It is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.**” It is God working in us, giving us both the desire and the power to fulfill His good purpose, to do what pleases Him. This is really good news. God, by His grace, not only gives us the gift of salvation but also gives us the means to “work” or “live” it out. The Christian life is grace from beginning to end. Some graces we receive *instead of our effort and action* (justification), and some graces we receive *as our effort and action* (sanctification).
- Our fruitfulness is produced from our willingness to obey and partner with the grace that gives us the desire to do His will and the power to do it. This is how Paul described this partnership and how it worked in his life:

1 Cor 15:10-11 ESV

I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

Col 1:29 ESV

For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

- “working out our salvation” is our struggling, our producing, our working out this salvation through the grace and energy of God working in us. Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith as we believe in Him, and He works through us that we may shine and He may be seen as glorious. God works within us, not just alongside us or with us. God *caused* the miracle (salvation); we *act* the miracle (sanctification).
- He then goes on to tell us specifically how we are to obey God. By doing everything without grumbling and arguing and holding firmly to the word of life.

Do everything without grumbling and arguing

Phil 2:14-16a NIV

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.

- Do everything without grumbling or arguing. This is a tall order. This is first applied to obeying God, then to living in a community with fellow believers, and finally in the context of the world.

- This can only be done this way: “Do everything without grumbling or arguing . . . as you hold firmly to the word of life.” Holding “firmly” to the word of life is the key to doing this. When I want to hold something firmly in my mind, I repeat it over and over again. I make sure I have it down and keep it easily accessible in my mind. I keep it as a treasure, something super important. If I keep the word of life, which is the gospel, which is the word of God, firmly in my mind, this will help me from grumbling or arguing.
- Scripture is our “toolbox;” it has the tools we need to be able to do every good work.

2 Tim 3:16-17 NIV

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- So we must ask ourselves, are we “holding firmly” to the word of life? Is it something that you read and hold on to? Ask God to give you a desire for it and the power to do His will because, by the way, this is His will, and He will answer this prayer. In doing so, you will see your grumbling or arguing going down and your joy and contentment rising.
- Notice that the results are in contrast to the rest of our world. You will be “blameless and pure in a warped and crooked generation” and also “you will shine like stars” against a dark sky. Not grumbling or arguing with God or others will set you apart as one who is “working out their salvation with fear and trembling.”
- Just like Jesus, in humility, we are to obey without grumbling or arguing, giving ourselves to the word and will of God. And just like Jesus, God will reward us with great joy to come.

Rejoice in the joy to come

Phil 2:16b-17 NIV

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.

- We can and should rejoice at the reward of the righteous. This promise is all over Scripture (Mat. 5:12, 6:4, 10:41, Lk. 6:23, I Cor. 3:14, Col. 3:24, Heb. 11:26, 2 John 8). Our sacrifice and service, being “poured out” for the glory of God is something to be encouraged by. It is good for us to remind ourselves of this and to continually encourage others. This is the eternal reality, and you have to believe it is true because Scripture promises us it is.

1 Peter 1:3-8 ESV

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

- If you “hold firmly” to passages like this, you will “hold loosely” to what is only of this world. This will give you the right perspective to help you not to grumble or complain, to humbly obey, and to be of one mind and heart with other believers. May you see clearly in your mind’s eye what is to come, and may the joy that is set before you empower you to obey and live in Christ.
- We are now going to have an interview with a young man who has grown up in this church and has chosen to boldly live in Christ.

Conclusion

- I hope the words of Philippians become precious to you. I hope you memorize key passages and hold firmly to them. May you commit and recommit yourself to following Jesus. May you continue to think and act like Him. May God continue to produce His fruit in you, and may you work to do His will in and through your life. May you call out to God to give you the desire and the power to do His will. May we see greater and greater things done through your lives and through this congregation.

Benediction

As you commit your way to the Lord, trusting that He will act, may He bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. Go in the power and peace of the Lord (Ps 37:5-6).

Questions for Growth Groups

- Which part of this passage resonates most with you, and why?
- How can this passage encourage you in your personal walk with Christ?
- What specific steps can you take this week to live out the principles found in Phil 2:12-18?
- How does holding firmly to God's word impact our joy and the joy of others?
- Paul talks about being poured out like a drink offering. How do you interpret this imagery, and what does it teach us about sacrifice and service?