

## **GOSPEL FREEDOM – Sanctification (2)**

The Gospel's message for grace – that sinners are forgiven and restored by God through the work of Jesus Christ – is not only that which brings us into relationship with God, but also that which grows us to maturity. Grace frees us from the dual temptations of despair in failure and self-centered pride in success. As Tim Keller states, “The Gospel is that you are more sinful and flawed than you ever dared believe, yet you can be more accepted and loved than you ever dared hope at the same time because Jesus Christ lived and died in your place. Salvation is of the Lord.” In other words, the engine of the Christian life is the “Gospel of Grace,” transforming all whom it touches. The Gospel Freedom is our central message, and the driving force behind our evangelism, growth, and service.

*Philippians 2.12-13 – Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

**Read**           Philippians 2.1-13

### **Context & Meaning**

Christ's work (death and resurrection) is the foundation for Paul's words (for his command), 'work out your own salvation,' in Philippians 2.12-13. In other words, because Christ is the one who has and is continuing to work on your behalf, you are (and you can!) can begin to work out the salvation you have received. When these verses are considered apart from this foundation they are meaningless.

Christ's death and exaltation serves as our example, our encouragement and our empowerment to follow in his way of obedience unto the Father. The Philippians had heard and seen this in Paul, but now Paul was no longer there. What were they to do? Paul exhorts them to keep on in the way of obedience realizing that even though he is absent they are not alone. And therefore, the salvation they are now to work out is not to be done simply in their own strength but in and through the One who is at work in them from the first unto the last. God is the One who inspires the earliest impulse to trust and obey and he is the One at work directing their salvation unto its final achievement. Doing this, as Paul makes clear, is the good pleasure of God.

### **Apply**

God has done it all so why do anything at all? This might be the question that pops into our minds when we focus on what God has done and is doing through Christ in bringing salvation to his people. If it is finished, as Jesus said it was on the cross, what else remains except for us to sit back and relax? But Philippians 2, as well as numerous other passages, refuses to let us take this stance. We are commanded to work, to work out the salvation we have received. However, this does not mean we are working in order to gain something (like God's favor), or that we are working in and through our own strength. Neither is possible and therefore neither is acceptable. Rather, to work out our salvation means to continue down the road of faith, down the road of trusting and depending on the God who saves.

**For Reflection and Discussion** – Sanctification (2) (*Philippians 2.1-13*)

1. The Spirit of Jesus is at work in us to will and to do for his good pleasure. In what ways does this free us from despair on the one hand and legalism on the other?
2. How does this passage give us strength and encouragement to go on when we really don't feel like we can go on anymore?
3. What is wrong with the passive approach to sanctification (God has done it all so why do anything at all)? Have you ever 'bought into' this approach? Did you find it freeing or burdensome?
4. We are commanded to work out our own salvation. How might this be misunderstood? How, if ever, have you misunderstood it? How was this faulty view corrected?
5. In what ways does our society view dependence favorably? Negatively? In light of Philippians 2.1-13, what is to be our view of the Christian's complete dependence on God? Does this sort of dependence resemble the other kinds of dependence that we might encounter in our society? How?
6. Discuss the following comment in light of Philippians 2.1-11?

*My Christian life is really pretty miserable; it is not fun. Instead, it is characterized by mere external obedience, legalism, fear and constant failure.*

If you were visiting with a fellow Christian friend who held this view how would seek to show them that 'there is a better way' to living the Christian life?