

“Jesus Makes a Difference” (Phil. 2:12-18)

- Paul is writing to experienced Christians. Nonetheless, he feels compelled to remind them of a basic Christian truth—that Jesus is supposed to make a difference in your life.
 - Jesus humbled himself through obedience (v.8).
 - Therefore, we also ought to humble ourselves through obedience (v. 12ff.)
 - Our obedience is the demonstration of the fact that when Jesus shows up in a person’s life, he makes a difference in that person’s life.
 - Like James 2:18 says “I will show you my faith by my works,” Phil. 2 is teaching us that our obedience is how we show that Jesus has made a difference in our lives.
- Three words of encouragement from Phil. 2:12-18

BODY

- I. **Work** Hard (12-13)
 - a. This is a word for experienced Christians (12a)
 - i. “as you have always obeyed”
 - ii. Even the experienced Christians still need God to be working on their lives.

I. Work Hard (12-13)

II. Learn Contentment (14-16)

III. Live Joyfully (17-18)

b. Never take your salvation for granted (12b)

i. "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"

1. At first blush, this sounds troubling.

a. We don't believe a person can earn his salvation by doing works.

b. Romans 4:5 – "And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness"

2. What does this mean? It refers to Christian obedience.

a. Connect 2:8's Jesus humbled himself by obedience with 2:12's call to obey/work out our own salvation

b. Working out your own salvation is what you do when you obey God. Your showing your salvation is not a fluke

3. We often think of salvation as something that occurs at a point in time

a. That's true, but it's incomplete.

- b. Salvation has many parts, of which initial conversion is just one. There's also sanctification—which is what is in view here.
- c. Acc. to Rom. 8, there's also foreknowing, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification.
- c. If God is working in you, you'll be working out your salvation (12b-13a)
 - i. We see things here from the human perspective (our working out) and the divine perspective (God's working in).
 - ii. God's work causes our work.
 - iii. Ephesians 2:9–10 – [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. (ESV)
 - iv. Silva: "While sanctification requires conscious effort and concentration, our activity takes place not in a legalistic spirit, with a view to gaining God's favor, but rather in a spirit of humility and

thanksgiving, recognizing that without Christ we can do nothing and so he alone deserves the glory.”

- v. Paraphrase of John Murray: God’s working in us is not nullified because we work, nor is our working automatically insignificant because God works. It’s also not true to say that we need God to do his part and he needs us to do our part. What is true is perhaps best stated simply: “God works and we work. But the relation is that because God works we work. All working out of salvation on our part is the effect of God’s working in us....The more persistently active we are in working, the more persuaded we may be that all the energizing grace and power is of God.”

d. God changes from the inside-out (13b)

- i. “to will (that’s the inside) and to work (that’s the outside)”
- ii. What would you say to someone who “got saved” years ago, but in whom that so-called

salvation has never made really even the tiniest difference?

1. I'd say you really need to work out your own salvation to demonstrate that God is working in you.

II. Learn **Contentment** (14-16)

a. Notice how the theme of unity continues

- i. 1:27's "but...one spirit...one mind...striving side by side"
- ii. 2:2's "[be] of the same mind...same love...in full accord and of one mind"
- iii. 2:3's "do nothing from selfish ambition...in humility count others more significant than yourselves"
- iv. 2:4's "look out for the interests of others [not just for yourselves]"

b. People who are content don't complain or fight

- i. To "grumble" means not only that you're discontent, but that you express your discontentment.
- ii. Grumbling is that unhappiness you sneaking out through your mouth.

1. People are complain all the time are not content. There is something about their life...something important...that they are unhappy with.
- iii. This is apparently *the* issued the Philippians were struggling with. They weren't getting along. There was no unity. Everybody was looking out for themselves. Nobody was looking out for each other.
1. Paul here tells them, "This is how I want you to work out your salvation—which is to say, to demonstrate that God is really inside of you working in you (i.e., that youre saved!)—by getting along, by humbling yourselves like Christ did, through obedience, by giving up your rights for the sake of others, by counting other people more significant than yourselves.
 2. You know who often gets their way in churches? Whoever is the loudest and most aggressive. But that is not the way of Christ!

Nor will it be the way of Southside Baptist Church.

iv. JM: story about young minister looking for the perfect church.

c. People who are content are different

i. Different in the best possible way

ii. Notice the language of contrast:

1. The world is "crooked and twisted," whereas the "children of God [are] without blemish"

2. The world is the dark backdrop against which the people of God "shine as lights in the world"

iii. Connect this passage with the Israelites murmuring against their leaders

1. Phil. 2:15 says "that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation."

2. Ex. 15-16 we read about the Israelites grumbling and disputing, and in particular, murmuring against Moses.

3. Deuteronomy 32:5 – [5] They have dealt corruptly with him; they are no longer his children because they are blemished; they are a crooked and twisted generation.
4. Combine this with Paul’s exhortation in Phil. 2:29 about the minister Epaphroditus and you can make a reasonable case that “the church leaders in Philippi were not being treated with full respect.”
5. Cf. 2 Cor. 2:10-11 – [10] Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, [11] so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

d. People who are content are truly saved

i. They will make it to the end

1. “hold fast”

2. “day of Christ...not run...or labor in vain”

III. Live **Joyfully** (17-18)

- a. A person who is content can be okay in any circumstance (17)
- i. "even if I die" (i.e., worst-case scenario)
 - ii. Cf. Philippians 4:11–13 – [11] Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. [12] I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. [13] I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (ESV)
- b. Contentment is a key virtue in any church's pursuit of unity
- i. Paul is "glad and rejoice[s]" with all the Philippians (18a)
 - ii. Likewise, they "also should be glad and rejoice with" him (18b)
- c. Notice the pastoral heart on display here. Even though Paul is speaking some tough love to the Philippians he ends by expressing his full confidence in them and basically tells them...even if this is the end...I'm satisfied. I'm proud.

- i. The unity is here peaking through the circumstance, and it's a unity between congregation and leadership.

CONCLUSION

- Make a difference in me!
- Make a difference in our church!