



KING'S CHAPEL

Daily Devotional - Philippians Study

Week 3 - Day 3

Approaching God

Read Romans 5:15-16 - *But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.*

When people in the ancient world thought of heroic leaders, rulers & kings, they often thought of Alexander the Great or Caesar Augustus who ruled with the military might and immense organizational skills necessary to hold empires together. Many even regarded these men as divine! This is what heroic leadership surely looked like, a chance to possess "god-like" power. In Romans 5, Paul points to another (the first Adam) who arrogantly grasped at the chance to be "like God, knowing good and evil." But in yesterday's passage (Phil. 2:5-11) we saw something totally unexpected in the person of Jesus. Jesus, didn't regard equality with God as something to take advantage of, something to exploit. Rather, the eternal son of God, regarded equality with God as committing to a different kind of path: becoming human, becoming Israel's second Adam, dying under the weight of the world's sin. This is what it meant to be equal with God. As you look at the incarnate son of God dying on the cross the most powerful thought you should think is: this is the true meaning of who God is. He is the God of self-giving love! Take a minute to respond to God in prayer as you start today's passage.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation - Philippians 2:12-18

Slowly read today's passage 2 or 3x's. Circle or underline important words or phrases.

Here, Paul is telling the Philippians they must grow into maturity and take responsibility for themselves. He can't be with them while in prison - and may not ever be again. He wants them to work out for themselves (on their own without him, but not without God) what this business of being saved will mean in practice. He stresses that the work of salvation is God's work from start to finish.

Philippians 2:12-18 - **12** 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, **13** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. **14** Do all things without grumbling or questioning, **15** that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, **16** holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. **17** Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. **18** Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Daily Study Questions

You may find it helpful to read through the commentary in “Resources for Further Study” at the end of today’s study to answer these questions.

Vs. 12 can often be confusing - “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” So let’s work on that today. Look again at Philippians 1:6, and then read Eph. 2:8-10.

- In light of these verses, what do you think Paul means?
- How does vs. 13 make clear that the phrase “your own salvation” isn’t meant to contrast the work of the Philippians with God’s work?
- Whose work then is being contrasted with that of the Philippians?
- The passage ends on a note of celebration (vs. 17-18). What gives Paul cause to celebrate?

Meditation & Reflection Questions

- When Paul speaks of them “shining as lights in the world,” (vs. 15) he is quoting a passage from the book of Daniel (12:3) which speaks of “the wise” - meaning Israelites skilled in knowing and applying God’s law, not least in a time of persecution or suffering. Who comes to mind as examples of such lights?
- When Paul uses the phrase “fear and trembling,” he means with “utter seriousness.” What would it mean for you to work out the practical implications of your salvation in this way?

Close in Prayer:

Thank Jesus for humbling himself for you, even to the point of death on a cross. Praise him that every knee will bow to him and every tongue confess that he is Lord. Pray that you will shine as a bright light in a sin-darkened world.

Commentary on Philippians 2:12-18

Phil. 2:12-13 - Verse 12 is often misunderstood to suggest salvation by works, meaning that Christians are responsible for doing things which will help them earn or keep their salvation. But it is clear from everything else he has written that Paul rejects any such teaching (see 3:2-11). In 2:12 Paul means “*salvation*” in terms of progressively coming to experience all of the aspects and blessings of salvation. The Philippians’ continued obedience is an inherent part of “*working out*” their salvation in this sense. But as v. 13 demonstrates, these works are *the result* of God’s work within his people - both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Salvation then, is God’s work from start to finish (Phil 1:6). Paul wants the Philippians to work out for themselves what this will mean in practice.

The phrase “*your own salvation*” isn’t meant to contrast this work of theirs with any work of God in salvation. It is contrasting their own responsibility for their spiritual welfare with the responsibility that Paul would take if he was with them. He isn’t there, and for all either of them know he may never be again. Paul wants them to know that despite his absence, God is always with them. We can take heart today knowing God is always with us. And He is fighting with us. His will is to make us holy and like Christ. He is working unto this end by gradually changing our hearts, giving us new desires, and changing us from the inside out.

Phil 2:14-15 - They need to do it all without grumbling or disputing. A great part of personal maturity as well as corporate unity and love is a lack of arguing and complaining. James tells us that these things come from our lusts that war within us. As we die to our pride and selfishness and grow in love and humility, we should see a dramatic decrease in discontentment that leads to whining and fussing and strife. This is also a reference to Israel in the wilderness, questioning God and Moses all the time. His words that they are to be “*without blemish in a crooked and twisted generation,*” recall the same words used to describe Israel in the wilderness in Deut 32:5. As often, Paul sees the church as the people of the new Exodus: brought out of the Egypt of sin and death through the Passover action of God in Jesus, and now on the way home to the real promised land. And this time they are going to get it right! That remains the challenge before the church today, just as it was for the Philippians in the first century.

Phil. 2:16 - The Philippians’ obedience to the word of life is not merely a matter of private concern. As an apostle and fellow sharer in the gospel, Paul’s own labor would be in vain if they failed to hold fast until the day of Christ and thus proved not to be genuine believers. Holding fast means both believing God’s Word and following it. Since the Greek *epechō* can mean either “hold fast” or “hold out to, offer,” some think that Paul may have in mind “holding forth,” i.e., proclaiming, the word of life.

Phil. 2:17- Paul compares himself to a drink offering (see 2 Tim. 4:6). This type of offering, familiar in both the OT and Greco-Roman culture, involved pouring out wine, either onto the ground or, as here, on an altar along with an animal or grain sacrifice (see Num. 28:7). It was a vivid illustration of a life “poured out” for God’s service. The Philippians, too, are a sacrificial offering; they are to emulate Paul’s joyful service to God.