

Bite Your Tongue

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 February 2023

Preacher: Jeremy Martinson

[0 : 00] Philippians chapter 2, starting in verse 12 and down through verse number 18. Philippians 2, 12 through 18. Isaac, you ready?

Okay. 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. Do all things without grumbling or questioning, 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, 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.

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. Likewise, you also should be glad and rejoice with me. Do you recall Paul's one thing from back in chapter 1 in verse number 27?

There was one thing that he wanted the Philippians to do. He wanted them to live their lives as citizens of heaven, worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[1 : 16] That was his one thing. Here's one thing that I want you to remember. And that verse started this section that we are in that will actually end this portion of the letter today.

This one thing, as citizens of heaven live worthy of the gospel. What does the gospel do? The gospel unifies God's people. And so that means that we should stand firm in one spirit, and we should contend together for the sake of the gospel, and we should consider others more important than ourselves, and we should look to the interests of others and not just to our own interests.

This is how humility leads to unity. And then last week, Ryan faithfully helped us answer the question, why should we be humble?

Who remembers the answer? Why should we be humble? This is an easy one. We should be humble because Jesus humbled himself.

Do you remember the story arc? Jesus was rich, and yet for our sakes, he became poor so that we through his poverty might become rich. Jesus humbled himself and became a man and suffered and died.

[2 : 48] And now God has highly exalted him. That's Jesus' story arc. Jesus became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

And since Jesus Christ is our Lord, since we claim that Jesus Christ is Lord, then we follow his example.

And that means Jesus-like humility that leads to Jesus-like obedience. Jesus Christ is our Lord, and we follow his word. And we follow his word. Christians often use the word salvation to refer to a point in time.

Maybe to refer to their conversion. You might hear someone say, have you been saved? Or are you saved? They're thinking about this word salvation as a point in time, like how you might pause a movie, and you can still see it sort of frozen on the screen.

But in the Bible, it's more common to see this word salvation and to recognize it as God's whole work, his whole redemptive work in someone's life.

[4 : 11] You can think back to chapter 1 in verse 19, where Paul assures the Philippians that his imprisonment will lead to his salvation. Now, when we looked at that together, we realized that Paul is not talking about getting out of prison.

And he's also not talking about the point in time when he was converted, because that happened on the road to Damascus. So what is Paul saying then when he says, my imprisonment will lead to my salvation?

He's saying that even in the suffering of his imprisonment, God is using it to make him more and more and more like Jesus. God is in the process of saving him.

Look at chapter 2 and verse 12. Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence, but even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Now, work out your own salvation does not refer to the point in time when you were converted. And so, we know that Paul is not saying here that you need to work for your salvation.

[5 : 41] We don't earn our salvation from God. And just as a heads up, this also doesn't have anything to do with going to the gym. That's good news. You can think about this word, work out, the way that you might work out a math problem.

Kids, are you listening? Are you with me? Who's doing long division? Evan, you're doing some long division? Fantastic. Who else is doing long division?

There must be some. Elam? Good. Okay? Long division, right? I'm going to turn around so I can make this work, right? You've got the numbers, and then you put a number here, and then you have to multiply it.

You bring that number down. You subtract. Then you bring down another number. And then you do it all again. And you keep repeating this process. What are you doing? You are working out the problem.

You might think of Matilda solving that algebra problem on the chalkboard when she was told to go up and to... What did... Polish. Polish the board.

[6 : 45] And instead, she solves this algebra problem. What did she do? She worked it out. I had an algebra teacher in high school.

His name was Mr. Argent. And he was a loud and a wonderful teacher. I learned a lot from him. And he had this policy where even if you got the answer wrong, but you showed your work how you got to the answer, he would give you a lot of credit.

So you could get the answer wrong. But if you showed him how you were working out the problem, then he would give you a lot of credit for doing the work.

Friends, we have the answer key. And the answer key. And the answer key is Jesus.

So when Paul says, work out your own salvation, he means in short, be like Jesus. How are we doing?

[7 : 54] It is hard to be like Jesus, isn't it? It's hard to be like Jesus.

We would like to tone down Paul's words here, wouldn't we? The way you might drop a big dollop of sour cream and some spicy chili. We'd kind of like to tone this down.

Work out your own salvation. Be like Jesus. Those seem like pretty strong words, Paul. Can we just tone that down a little bit?

But it is impossible to moderate Paul's exhortation. A gospel-worthy life means nothing less than conscious, diligent, and active effort towards being like Jesus.

Working out our own salvation is hard. But I have good news for you. Good news from this text.

[9 : 29] God gives his people all that we need in order to work out our salvation. The strength that we need and even the willingness we need to continue working out our salvation.

This comes to us from God. Look at verse number 13. For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose.

What is happening here? As we are working out our salvation, God is working our salvation in us.

Do you see that there in the text? We are working out and God is working in. Now, we should not take this to mean that this is some kind of shift work.

That, you know, we work a little bit and then we punch out and then we let God do some work. And then we're going to come back and we're going to punch back in and do some more work.

[10 : 37] That is not what Paul is talking about here. He's also not talking about some kind of cooperative effort where we do our best and then God does the rest.

I don't want you to think of yourself as some kind of a white sugar cookie that God just needs to put the frosting on. That's not what's happening here. Think with me about Matthew chapter 14.

The disciples are in a boat at night on a lake in the middle of a terrible, terrible storm. Jesus walks towards them and the disciples freak out because they think they are seeing a ghost.

Have you ever wondered why do they think that Jesus is a ghost? Because everybody knows that men and women and boys and girls can't walk on water.

So when they see this figure coming towards them on the water, walking on the water, that's all they have to go on is this must be some kind of a ghost.

[11 : 56] Narrator voice. But Jesus is the God man, isn't he? So he can walk on the water. Peter says, I'm going to go check this out.

Just like Peter, isn't it? I wonder what the other disciples thought. Like, it's the visible confusion meme, right? They're like, what are you talking about?

This doesn't make any sense at all. You can't walk on water. You will sink. Like a rock. Like a rock. Peter says, Peter says, Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water.

I don't know if Peter was ready for what Jesus was going to say. Jesus says, come. Peter climbs out of the boat and walks on the water towards Jesus.

Did Peter have any special ability or strength in himself in order to walk on the water? No. Nothing in himself.

[13 : 08] No special strength. No special ability. But Peter did walk on the water. How did Peter do that? All of the strength that Peter need to walk on the water came from Jesus.

What did Peter do? He simply had to get out of the boat and obey when Jesus said, come. We just sang this together, didn't we?

Yet, not I, but through Christ in me. You don't have any strength or special ability to work out your own salvation.

You don't have it in yourself. But my brother, my sister, by the power of the Holy Spirit, God gives it to you. God is working in you, giving you new desires.

This is important. Changing your will. Cleansing your conscience. Purifying your mind. Healing your heart.

[14 : 20] And God's miraculous, gracious work is all you need in order to work out your own salvation and be more like Jesus.

Jesus. John Murray, one of the founders of Westminster Theological Seminary, said this, The more persistently active we are in working, the more persuaded we may be that all the energizing grace and power is of God.

I learned something this week about verses 12 and 13. These two verses don't stand alone.

They have a context. We work out our own salvation because God works in you. This comes attached with specific application.

And I suspect that Paul's application does not make our top five ways to be more like Jesus. Should we test this out? What do you think, kids?

[15 : 36] What is one way that you can grow in being more like Jesus? Josie. Being kind to other people.

Very good. Very true. What else? What else can we do to be more like Jesus as his followers? Praising God.

Worship. Thank you, Isaac. Very good. Very true. Any other brave ones? I think if you were to ask this question around the lunch table, it might be a good conversation to have with one another.

I suspect that we won't get to the way that Paul talks about. I think we could name lots of ways to apply verses 12 and 13. And probably Paul's specific application would not make our list.

See, Paul is concerned about our mouths. He's concerned about what we say. Look at verse number 14.

[16 : 41] Do everything without grumbling and arguing.

Paul understands Jesus' words that the mouth speaks what is in the heart. Your heart is like the water tower, and your mouth is like the faucet in your bathroom.

When you turn on the faucet, the water in the water tower comes flowing out through the faucet. This is the way our hearts work.

When we open our mouths and we say something, that doesn't just come from nowhere. It doesn't come from your stomach or your lungs. It comes from down inside of your heart.

Paul understands this. When you open your mouth, what is in your heart flows out. And sometimes grumbling flows out. Murmuring, muttering gossip.

[18 : 00] I think of this. I know this illustration isn't great, but if you come up with a better one, I'm all about it, so tell me about it. It's like murmuring, bubbling, burping Alfredo.

Bleh. Bleh. Bleh. Sometimes what comes out of our hearts is grumbling. Grumbling. Grumbling.

Grumbling is a negative emotional response to unpleasant, inconvenient, or disappointing circumstances. Do you have any unpleasant, inconvenient, or disappointing circumstances in your life?

Grumbling flows out of a self-centered heart that believes, I deserve better.

When we believe, I deserve better, what will flow out of that heart is grumbling about the circumstances that we find ourselves in.

[19 : 12] Sometimes arguing flows out of our hearts. And where grumbling is emotional, arguing is more intellectual. Arguing minimizes and dehumanizes others by elevating what we know and minimizing what they know.

And so arguing will overrule feedback, and it will dismiss concerns, and it will deflect legitimate criticism, and it will bicker over beliefs, and it will nitpick responses of others.

This is arguing. When we argue, we refuse to listen, or understand, or gently persuade, because hear this, we only want to win.

Arguing wants to win. And arguing also flows from a self-centered heart. But it's not a heart that says, I deserve better. It's a heart that thinks, I am right.

I'm right. And I have to win. Who was always right? Yeah.

[20 : 28] And Jesus, right? Thank you. And Jesus. Who actually did deserve better than the treatment he received?

Jesus did, didn't he? And yet, look what Hebrews chapter 5 teaches us. All the things that we have although he was the son, he, Jesus, learned obedience from what he suffered.

Now, Jesus didn't need to learn how to obey. He was perfect. There was no sin in him. No rebellion in him. No self-centeredness in him.

He didn't need to learn how to obey. But in his humility, Jesus learned what it was like to obey. Jesus-like humility leads to Jesus-like obedience.

What if you really don't deserve better because you really don't know what's best? How many conversations would never happen if you stopped grumbling about your spouse, about your ex, about your manager, about the president, about a brother or sister?

[21 : 55] How many conversations just would never happen? What if instead of grumbling about your circumstances, you said this, I don't know what God is doing, but I believe that he is doing something good.

What is that? That's Jesus-like humility, isn't it? When was the last time you said, I'm sorry, I am wrong.

Will you please forgive me? What if instead of arguing, you said, I want to listen. I want to understand your perspective. I'm all about hearing you for these next several minutes.

I'm not going to argue. I'm not going to disagree. I'm not going to deflect. And even if we get to the end and we still disagree, I want to hear and know your perspective. What is this?

This is Jesus-like humility that is leading us towards Jesus-like obedience. There's an African proverb that goes like this.

[23 : 04] When elephants fight, the grass gets trampled. Grumbling gossip gobbles up reputations, doesn't it?

An arrogant arguing destroys relationships, and these two sins, rooted in pride and self-centeredness, spoil community, and they splinter unity, and they kill churches.

I love how Paul motivates the Philippians with the very most basic of all incentives in the Bible.

He just wants them to act like they are. Look at verse 14 again. Do everything without grumbling and arguing so that you may be blameless and pure.

Children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world by holding firm to the word of life.

[24 : 21] This is the most basic incentive in the Bible. Just act like what you are. You are children of God. Children of the living God.

Adopted sons and daughters of the King. Paul just wants them to act like it. The Holy Spirit is in the business of making us blameless and pure.

And grumbling and arguing are like blood-red chili stains on a beautiful white wedding dress. And these sins must not be tolerated among God's people.

Why? Because Paul wants us to be faultless in a crooked and perverted generation. Our Jesus-like humility that leads us to Jesus-like obedience should make us stick out like a sore thumb.

I think that's the metaphor that Paul is working on here. You're to be different from this crooked and perverted generation that you're a part of. We would say you need to stick out.

[25 : 30] You need to be distinct. You need to be different from the world. The world is dark. Be like one of those stars. How will we do this?

We will do this by holding fast to the word of life. Hold fast to the gospel. Hold fast to the scripture.

Be like what you are. Children of God. Paul offers them a second incentive. I love this.

If the Philippians will give up grumbling and arguing. If they live gospel-worthy lives. If they grow in Jesus-like humility that leads to Jesus-like obedience.

Here's what Paul says to them. When I stand before Jesus someday, I will know that my work was not in vain. When I stand in judgment someday.

[26 : 29] When I stand in judgment someday. If you'll give up these sins of grumbling and arguing amongst yourselves. And you commit to sticking out like a sore thumb in this crooked and perverted generation.

If you shine like stars and hold fast to the word of life. When I stand before Jesus, it'll all be worth it. Look at verse 16.

Then. I can boast in the day of Christ that I didn't run or labor for nothing.

It'll all be worth it. Work out your own salvation. Be the children of the living God that you are.

And when I, Paul, stand before Jesus, it'll all be worth it to me. Even if, he says in verse 17. But even if I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrificial service of your faith.

[27 : 29] I am glad and rejoice with all of you. In the same way, you should also be glad and rejoice with me.

Paul says, my ministry. And even if I have to die for this gospel. It'll only be like the cherry on top. If you will commit to being faithful.

And blameless. And pure. And live like the children of God that you are. My life poured out. Will just be like the cherry on top of this beautiful Sunday.

If I can mix the metaphor. This beautiful offering. Paul says, it'll all be worth it. It'll all be worth it. Why?

Because God's gracious, miraculous work is making us more like Jesus. Jesus. I wonder how the other disciples reacted to Peter when he got back from walking on the water.

[28 : 40] Do you think they were excited? Do you think they were shocked? Do you think maybe they were even just a little bit jealous? That Peter was the one crazy enough to say, I'm going to go check this out?

They saw Peter walk. And they saw Peter sink. And they saw Jesus rescue him. They knew that Peter could not walk on water.

Not without Jesus. But I still have to believe that when Peter got back into the boat. And he's a little wet because he sunk and Jesus had to rescue him.

I suspect that there was pats on the back for Peter. High fives. Fist bumps. Whatever it was that was appropriate for that culture. They were excited about what they had seen.

Just like Peter, our walk towards Jesus will not be without its doubts. It will not be free of weakness and failure and sin.

[29 : 53] But could we remember to rejoice together? That's how this portion ends. The word rejoice is actually here four times.

If you see the word glad, they're just trying to help us make some English sense of this. It's the same word four times. I'm rejoice and I rejoice with you in the same way you should rejoice and rejoice with me.

It's four rejoicings. I wonder if we can grow together in celebrating God's work among us whenever we see it.

I wonder if we can grow together at affirming the Holy Spirit's power in one another. I wonder if we can encourage one another as we work out our own salvation because we are confident that it is God who is at work in us.

Should we pray about that together? Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for preserving it for us.

[31 : 05] Thank you for giving us this time to be together and to sit under the preaching of your word. And thank you for your Holy Spirit who has come to do work of convicting and encouraging and comforting.

Brothers and sisters, let's take a few moments and let's allow the Holy Spirit to do some work in our hearts privately.

Perhaps that means repentance. Perhaps that means receiving God's grace and forgiveness. Let's take a moment and do that now.

Father, we sang together this morning, With every breath I long to follow Jesus.

And we confess that that is true. And we also acknowledge that the spirit is willing and the flesh is weak. And we can resonate with Paul's argument that the things that I know I should do, I don't always do them.

[32 : 17] And the things that I know I shouldn't do, sometimes I do those things. Would you please continue to do the work of working in us, being more like Jesus?

And would you help us to be diligent and active and faithful in working out our salvation, and especially in these two specific ways that your word has given us today, in our grumbling and our arguing.

We are eager to see one another grow. We are eager to see the Holy Spirit's work. We want to be people known for rejoicing and celebrating all that you are doing in and among us.

Thank you for the forgiveness of sins that we have received because of the blood of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you that we can affirm together this solid ground, this firm foundation that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

Blessed Holy Spirit, please come and do work. Please continue to be among us as we continue to worship. Perhaps today you would also save someone who needs to be saved today.

[33 : 46] Someone who has never called upon the name of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps today would be that day when you would grant them life and faith, and they would respond to your gracious good gift by repenting and believing this gospel.

Thank you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.