

A PHILIPPIANS STUDY

DISCUSSION GUIDE

November 5, 2023

PHILIPPIANS week 8 - Aaron McRae

This Discussion Guide is designed to help you **think more deeply** about the sermon and **engage with others** through thoughtful conversation, biblical exploration and **allow God to work** in your life as you apply what you discover.

➤ CONVERSATION STARTER

What is something you had to work really hard to accomplish?

➤ EXPLORATION

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul urged the church to keep doing good work even though he was not there to see it first hand. He wrote to them from prison, but even though he was hundreds of miles away from them, the news of their faithfulness had reached Paul.

Philippians 2:12-13 (From your bible, read aloud)

Apparently Paul was not concerned with them believing the good news of Jesus, he wanted to be sure that they kept living a life of faith. Paul knew that it was unlikely that he would ever be able to visit them again in person, but he didn't want that to hinder them from continuing to be obedient to God and grow in their faith. He wanted them to live faithfully even when he was not there to instruct or correct them.

Do your driving habits change when you know a Police Officer is near you? If so, how?

Paul knew that his presence made a difference in the way the church lived their lives. He wanted them to be diligent whether or not he was with them. In verse 12 he urges them to **"...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling..."** Their salvation was secure. They didn't need to work for it, but Paul wanted them to grow in it. Salvation is a gift from God to those who believe, and it has three distinct dimensions; past, present and future.

Past = Justification - God's gracious gift to us when we repent and believe.

Present = Sanctification - the process of growing into spiritual maturity as we honor God and obey His word.

Future = Glorification - direct and unhindered access to God for faithful followers when Christ returns.

Three Dimensions of Salvation (read verses aloud)

Past: Justification - Ephesians 2:8-9

Present: Sanctification - Galatians 2:20

Future: Glorification - John 10:28-29

What stands out to you from these verses?

Once we have received the gift of salvation from God we can be assured that this gift is ours to keep. This is something we didn't earn so we don't have to work hard to keep it.

Salvation is the work of God that we receive when we put our faith and trust in Christ. We do, however, have a responsibility according to Paul to **"...continue to work out our salvation with fear and trembling..."** giving honor and reverence to God.

“The primary way we cultivate fear of the Lord: personal prayer and corporate worship. We deliberately interrupt our preoccupation with ourselves and attend to God. Placing ourselves intentionally in sacred space, in sacred time and we just wait!”

~Eugene Peterson

Fear and Trembling

An awareness of our own vulnerability

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A sense of awe and wonder at the work of God

“There is an immense difference between training to do something and trying to do something...Spiritual transformation is not a matter of trying harder, but of training wisely.” ~Dallas Willard, Spirit of the Disciplines

How would you describe the difference between trying and training? Give examples

Philippians 2:13 (From your bible, read aloud)

It is God who does the work of transformation in our lives as we take time to allow that work to happen. When we intentionally open ourselves to the work of God we begin to see true spiritual transformation happen. As we read God’s word, pray and grow in our faith, our lives begin to change.

Philippians 2:14-16 (From your bible, read aloud)

This passage is filled with Old Testament references that enhance the beauty of the story we are being invited into. Consider the story of God’s people being delivered from a life of slavery in Egypt. They saw countless miracles and yet it seemed all they did was complain.

We also read in the New Testament about the miracles of Jesus, where he fed crowds of people with just a few loaves and fishes and he healed the sick and even calmed a raging storm with just a word. The disciples witnessed those things first hand, and yet they were still afraid and they had doubts and complaints.

Having doubts or fears does not mean that we have not received salvation, it simply means that we are still being transformed by God. As we grow and mature in our faith, we begin to become refined in a way that helps us keep our trust in God, no matter what circumstances we face.

Share about a time when your faith helped you work through a difficult situation.

One of the ways you may be able to evaluate your growth is to pay attention to your reactions when difficult situations arise. Do you grumble and complain? Do you stir up drama? Does your faith actually make a difference in the way you respond?

Matthew 12:35-37 (From your bible, read aloud)

When we are growing in our faith, our attitudes, our behaviors and our choices will begin to look different from the ways of the world around us. This is one of the most effective ways to share our faith - when we face trials, the people around us will see how we respond and may wonder what is different about us.

Matthew 5:14-16 (From your bible, read aloud)

The good deeds mentioned in this passage do not help us earn our salvation. Salvation is a gift. As we learn to trust God to do the good work of spiritual transformation in us, we begin to live in a way that brings glory to God. When the people around us see the hope with which we live, they may be drawn to know God too.

Paul says, “*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.*”

When Paul wrote this, he was experiencing a depth of struggle that few people have ever experienced, and yet he is writing to encourage others to keep trusting in God. Their faithfulness was a cause for joyful celebration for Paul. He knew that they had experienced salvation through faith and that they were working out their faith with fear and trembling so that one day he would see them again when Christ returns.

➤ TAKE AWAY

“Fear of the Lord is not studying about God, but living in reverence before God. We don’t so much lack knowledge, we lack reverence.” ~Eugene Peterson

As we seek to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, we acknowledge and honor God as the giver of salvation. We also join with him to open ourselves up to his transforming presence in our lives.

Take time to pray for one another that no matter what comes your way, your faith in God would grow stronger this week.