Freedom – Work It Out
11/1/26
Philip pians 2:12–18
Sunday AM

DYK that there are things in life you can't accomplish by watching someone else do them? For example, in the history of mankind, no one has ever gotten into shape or developed muscle by sitting on the couch eating Bonbons watching someone else exercise. NO ONE! B/c at some point, ***if you want to experience the benefits – you have to participate in the process***.

The same is true spiritually. Just b/c we profess faith doesn't mean we have a living faith b/c anyone can attend church, listen to a sermon, go to a LIFE Group, and serve in a ministry – but if we're only going thru the motions and not actually engaging in the holy pursuit of seeking to be w/ Jesus to become like Him – then we've missed the point.

Problem is – we live in a culture that values quick, fast, and in a hurry – instant everything. We want spiritual maturity w/out spiritual discipline, victory over sin w/out surrendering our desires, and strong Christian families w/out investing in our loved ones.

WHY – b/c we want the benefits of spiritual growth w/out having to participate in spiritual pursuit.

But this is **NOT** how the Christian life works. It's not a fast process and it never occurs by osmosis but by daily surrender and relentless spiritual effort.

We have to pursue the One who has first pursued us which is a slow, intentional process of dying to self to exchange our will for His will as we follow Him.

This is what Paul is discussing in Philippians 2:12-18.

Dear friends, as you've always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation w/ fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act to fulfill his good purpose. Do everything w/out grumbling or arguing, that you may become pure and blameless, children of God w/out fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you'll shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I'll be able to boast on the day of Christ that I didn't run or labor in vain. But even if I'm being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I'm glad and rejoice w/ all of you. So, you too should be glad and rejoice w/ me."

At first glance, this passage can seem confusing. B/c after emphasizing what Jesus has done for us, Paul shifts to what we're called to do in response. He moves from Christ's obedience to our obedience, from His humility to our responsibility, and from what God has done *for us* to what He desires to do *thru us.*

While don't work *for* our salvation, once we're saved; to thrive – we must work ***out*** what God has worked ***in***. To do this, there are (4) things we all must do:

WORK OUT – Take Responsibility for Our Growth

…work out your salvation w/ fear and trembling.

work out (*katergazomai*) means to bring something to its intended result.

In saying – *work out your salvation w/ fear/trembling*, Paul isn't telling us to live terrified that God might reject us. He's reminding us that following Jesus isn't casual business and that we should approach our relationship w/ God w/ reverence, humility, and a healthy awareness of how desperately we need Him.

SEE – God has given us new life in Christ, and now, we're responsible to mature our faith. Meaning – God doesn't call us to work **FOR** what Jesus has finished but to work **OUT** what He's begun.

This is why Paul stresses **obedience**. He commends their faithfulness in his *presence* but challenges them to remain faithful in his *absence* – b/c our faith matters most when our spiritual influences are around.

Parents understand this. When our children are young, we establish rules to remind them of what's right and wrong. But as they mature, the goal isn't that they obey us b/c we're standing over them – but that they live w/ character when we're not around them.

Paul is saying something similar. We're not to obey just b/c others are watching, but b/c Jesus is our Lord – b/c spiritual maturity is revealed by what we choose to do when nobody is making us do it.

For this to occur, we have to put ourselves in a position to grow as everything about the Christian life is grounded in the activity and ministry of the H.S.

LME – there are (2) dangerous extremes regarding our spiritual growth. One says everything depends on us – so, we must try harder to become more disciplined. The other says everything depends on God – so just sit back and wait for the H.S. to transform your life.

Paul rejects both. He says God is responsible to provide the power while we're responsible to pursue.

Notice – God doesn't just give us the ability to obey; He works w/in us to **WANT** to obey. He transforms not only our actions but also our desires, reshaping what we love, value, and pursue. So, God changes our hearts, but we're responsible for how we respond.

Think about a sailboat. A sailor can't manufacture the wind, but he can raise the sails and respond to the wind when it's blowing. Likewise, we can't manufacture spiritual power, but we can respond obediently to God's work w/in us when He's moving. To do so, we have to get on the water and raise/trim the sails.

So, are you intentionally pursuing spiritual maturity, or just hoping it happens? No one abides w/out effort.

LIVE OUT – Let Your Attitude Reflect Jesus

do everything w/out grumbling or arguing.

How much? **Everything**! Obviously, Paul never had to drive in Atlanta traffic. What he's saying is that **it's not our spiritual activity but our attitude that most reflects our surrender**.

I find it interesting that after telling us to work out our salvation, the first practical evidence Paul offers wasn't witnessing, giving, or prayer – it is our attitude.

Why? B/c *our attitude always determines our altitude*.

Yet how often do we measure spiritual maturity by how much someone knows or how actively they serve. But Paul says this is a wrong scorecard. The best way to qualify a person's faith is by their attitude. Team Jesus people shouldn't look like they've been weaned on pickle juice or think criticism is a spiritual gift.

Look at the words he shares – **grumbling** refers to a murmuring attitude that's continually dissatisfied. While **arguing** refers to a critical, contentious attitude. Together, these words identify an attitude that subvert our relationships w/ people and w/ God.

DON'T MISS – Paul isn't just telling individual Christians to grow spiritually. He's telling the church to **live differently** together. B/c nothing undermines our witness faster than Christians who profess the love of Jesus but refuse to practice it w/ one another.

Remember Israel in the wilderness? God delivered His people from Egypt, parted the Red Sea, provided food from heaven, and faithfully guided them. Yet they continually complained about their leaders, the food, their circumstances, and future. Instead of celebrating what God had done, they were consumed w/ what God hadn't done according to their expectations.

Sound familiar? Too often, we complain about our schedules, responsibilities, families, jobs, and even our church b/c we've become so preoccupied w/ our preferences/expectations, we forget our blessings.

It's here where we must remember that Jesus humbled Himself, surrendered His rights, and became a servant – calling us to have the same attitude that He had.

Just imagine how your life would change if, instead of asking – *why didn't someone do this for me*? We asked – *how can I serve someone else*? What if instead of criticizing when our expectations aren't met, we celebrated our blessings? Or extended grace instead of assuming the worst? I'll tell you. Our [1]relationships would strengthen, [2]our faith would deepen, and [3]our witness would be more credible.

Listen – the world notices not just what we say we believe, but also how we behave.

SHINE OUT – Live Distinctively in a Fallen World

...that you may become pure and blameless, children of God w/out fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you'll shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.

TBS – Paul isn't suggesting **sinless** perfection here, but He is suggesting that as Jesus followers – **we sin less**.

Paul's point is that our character/conduct should always reflect who Jesus is and what He's done for us as we live in a crooked/corrupt world.

SEE – we live in a world filled w/ moral confusion, broken relationships, and selfish ambition. Yet Paul's solution wasn't to [1]w/draw from it, or [2]become bitter toward it, or [3]continually complain about how bad everything has become. Instead, he's called us to shine like a light piercing the darkness.

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill can't be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16

God hasn't called us to reflect the darkness of our culture – He's called us to reveal the light of Jesus w/in our culture. Not by becoming strange, arrogant, or self-righteous, but by being distinctively Christlike. We do this by how we live and how we hold firmly to His Word to help others discover the Jesus we follow.

THINK ABOUT IT – A lighthouse doesn't exist to impress sailors w/ its beauty, but to guide them to safety. Likewise, **we don't shine to show people how good we are, but to show them how good Jesus is.**

POUR OUT – Invest Your Life in What Matters

Even if I'm being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I'm glad and rejoice w/ all of you.

Remember – Paul is writing from prison. His future was uncertain, and execution was imminent. Yet instead of complaining, he rejoiced b/c he understood that ***the true value of life isn't measured by what we accumulate, but by what we invest in others***.

LOOK AGAIN at what he said – *even if I'm being poured out like a drink offering.*

In the OT, a drink offering involved pouring wine out before God as part of a sacrifice. It was an expression of worship and surrender. And once poured out, it couldn't be taken back. It was a once and for all.

Paul was saying that even if following Jesus cost him everything, including his life, he would gladly pour it out for the sake of Christ and the faith of others.

So, Paul wasn't grieving over what he might lose, but rejoicing over what God was achieving thru his life. He understood what we often forget – ***the greatest joy in life isn't found in how much we keep for ourselves, but in how willingly we give ourselves to Jesus***.

Yet here's our problem. Most of us spend our lives trying to avoid being poured out. We protect our time, guard our comfort, and pursue our convenience. We work hard to build a life we can enjoy, but sometimes forget to invest our lives in something that will last.

Jesus said – *Whoever tries to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me and the gospel will save it.* Mark 8:35

IOW – A life spent on self will eventually come to nothing, while a life surrendered to Jesus can make an and earthly/eternal difference.

B/c there's a difference b/w living a good life and living a God-life that counts for eternity.

In May 2000, at a Passion One-day gathering near Memphis, TN, a 60 yr. old pastor delivered a message that became a defining moments of this generation. Only what was said that day wasn't complicated, just convicting. And more than 25 yrs later, it's a message we all still need to hear – whether we're 18 or 80.

Play video

W/out question – the greatest tragedy in life is coming to the end of it only to realize that it was spent it on things that didn't matter.

Listen – we only get one life. And the question isn't how long we live, but what we have we lived for? Please don't settle for just being saved and pursuing things that won't last or matter – instead… work out your salvation – put it to good use for God's glory and story. Put it to good use so that one day you might hear – ***Well done My good and faithful servant***!

Let God do something **IN** you that makes an eternal difference **THRU** you.