



PHILIPPIANS: JOY FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY
LIGHTS IN THE WORLD • PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18 • 5/15/2022

NOTES

| This week we will be discussing "conquering complaining".

MAIN POINT

We are lights in the world when we offer ourselves fully and sacrificially in the service of others.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What daily task is most difficult for you to do without complaining or arguing? Why?

When do you most often find yourself grumbling in your relationship with God?

We all find certain aspects of the Christian life difficult and demanding. We can be tempted to complain about or give up on the things that challenge us. Paul didn't advocate passivity in the Christian life. He taught that God works in believers and believers actively work. God doesn't work in us because we have worked. Just the opposite is true. Because God works, we therefore work.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13.

How do we live obediently to God, according to Paul in these verses?

What is the difference between working out your salvation and working for your salvation?

Arrogance and pride are the opposite of “fear and trembling.” Why is there no place for arrogance and pride in a believer who is working out his or her salvation?

How would you respond to a friend who said, “I’m not good enough to be an example of Christianity”?

What is God’s responsibility and what is yours for achieving God’s “good purpose”?

What are some reasons that believers might fail to grow spiritually?

For Paul, sanctification was working out what God was working within. That is, sanctification is a combination of human effort and divine activity. Throughout his writings, but especially in the passage under examination, Paul linked human striving with God’s power in the pursuit of spiritual maturity. He called believers to self-activity by virtue of God’s powerful working in them. Paul instructed the Philippian church, that in his absence they must diligently work out their own salvation. But their obedience isn’t to be understood in the sense of following rules but of being completely devoted to Christ.

| HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 2:14-18.

Why are complaining and arguing so harmful to the church and its witness to the world?

Having Christ’s mind-set and demonstrating it in the church’s fellowship would preclude grumbling (expressing indignant complaints, whispering secretly) and arguing (disputing, wrangling). Both terms indicated self-assertiveness, which was the opposite attitude of self-giving that Christ modeled.

In what way do you shine forth as different from the world? Does this fact bring you joy or sorrow? Why?

In what ways should a Christian be different from the world?

What should be our motive in seeking to be shining examples of Christian living?

What is your motive?

Holding firmly to the gospel (v. 16) is the key to shining brightly in our world. We shine as believers when our Christian lifestyle stands out as different from those of lost people around

us. We not only must believe, but we also must behave in a way that the light of Christ shines brightly and steadily before others.

Read Matthew 5:14-16. In this symbolism, what does the “light” represent?

What’s wrong with putting a light under a basket? What’s wrong with acting as though faith in Christ is a private matter?

The illustration of the lamp shows the absurdity of someone claiming to be a believer but trying to keep it a secret from others. No true Christian who has the light of Christ covers it. A true believer displays faith not in a self-righteous or self-glorifying way but so others may see the light and come to Christ. Each person bears personal responsibility for sharing the light of the gospel with others. People genuinely committed to Jesus will show it by what they do and how they grow spiritually.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What step can you take this week to make your faith in Christ and the power of the gospel more evident to others?

In what ways are you consistently demonstrating your faith in (commitment to) Christ?

What are some activities that lead to the spiritual growth Paul encouraged?

What active steps are you taking toward spiritual growth in your relationships at work, at home, and so forth?

Similarly, what steps are you taking toward spiritual transformation with the stewardship of your finances and your time? With your church involvement?

PRAYER

As you lead in a closing prayer, invite your group members to confess silently to God areas where they fall short in working out their salvation and shining for Him.

COMMENTARY

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18

In 2:12 Paul continued his practical exhortation on how the Philippians were to live—whether in his presence or in his absence. Paul had just shown the depth of Jesus' obedience (2:5-11), and it is that same level of obedience that believers are to exhibit. Obedience to Christ is the primary responsibility of the church, and it is a critical component of the Christian life. The humility and obedience we see in Jesus Christ is to be a factor on our own lives. How are we to show obedience? The command is to work out your own salvation. When we work out our salvation, we are taking the salvation God's given us and strengthening it through spiritual growth.

We cannot work out our salvation without God's intervention. There is human responsibility, but there is also divine empowerment. It is a partnership. We work out our salvation with a serious realization that God is working in us. The word for God's working refers to an energizing work that is always effective. When God works, He succeeds and enables us to act. God places the desire within us to be obedient, and then He leads us to do it. When we are obedient, we are true to God's purpose. We carry out His will, and the purpose behind His will is to bring glory to Himself. God enables us to work out our salvation, and the way we work it out is to bring praise and glory to the One who gave it to us.

Paul called the Philippians to do everything—all aspects of working out their own salvation—without grumbling and arguing (v. 14). When we are working for God's purpose and His glory, it's difficult to be self-centered. Yet self-centeredness and pride enter into our spiritual progress leading us away from unity with God.

When we live as Paul described, we are seen as blameless and pure (v. 15). Our lives are to be pure—unadulterated with the things of the world. Our lives are to be of such purity that no one can blame us or find fault with anything in our lives. We already are children of God, but we are to live like children of God. The faultlessness of believers is contrasted with the world of non-believers, which is characterized by Paul as a crooked and perverted generation. This generation is crooked in that it has turned away from the truth. Perverted is an even stronger word and carries the idea that it has twisted and distorted the truth. The contrast is so sharp between the two groups that it can be compared to the difference between light and darkness. In the midst of the moral darkness around us, we shine like stars in the world. Even with our imperfections, we still serve as a light to a world in darkness. We shine—we are seen—and we point to Christ.

Christians always ought to live in such a way as to present a vivid contrast to the world in which they live (v. 16). The word translated hold firmly indicates that Paul desired his readers to be

beacons of truth to those pagans among whom they lived. By their lives, the Philippians were to demonstrate that they were holding fast to the gospel.

Paul's words in verse 17 indicate that he was aware of the very real possibility that he would suffer martyrdom for the cause of Christ. He referred to the possibility of such a death in sacrificial terms. Paul then invited his readers to reciprocate by rejoicing with him in light of his possible martyrdom (v. 18). Rather than being sad at the prospect of his death, Paul urged them to rejoice with him.