

2016: Week 41

Sunday, October 9th 2016

"Work, and Be Worked On"

Philippians 2:12-13

¹² So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." (NASB).

Have you ever been given a task that seemed impossible to accomplish? In such a situation you may have felt frustrated that the work required to accomplish the assigned task was significantly more than you could handle. You may not have possessed the resources, time, or necessary support to complete what you set out to get done. There is a popular theological phrase that states, "God will never give you more than you can handle," which believe it or not, is *not actually in the Bible*. This saying probably originated from misconstruing Paul's words in **1 Corinthians 10:13**: "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be *tempted beyond what you are able*, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it." There is a big difference between God preventing you from being tempted beyond what you can bear and God preventing you from encountering situations that you cannot handle. Sometimes in life there are situations that you cannot handle on your own. However, this should not leave the believer without hope! Praise the Lord that He is able to handle situations that we can't!

On Sunday Johnnie continued our church-wide study through the **Book of Philippians**. In this particular passage, we will be reminded that God expects us to be responsible for the privileges and opportunities He has given us in Christ. However, He never wants us to undertake life's opportunities alone. He gives us all the tools, resources, strength, and power that we need to accomplish our given tasks... through the Holy Spirit. God expects us to "work out our salvation" in a humble and respectful manner, but He also reminds us that He is the one who is "at work" in us.

1. **READ Philippians 2:12-13**

- Imagine that your salvation in Christ represents a field that God has given you. Because He gave it to you, you didn't work for it. It was given to you out of God's grace. God wants you to cultivate the land He has given to you. He says, "Work the land, so that it bears fruit."
 - A) What should your response be to God's instruction here?
 - B) Would you say that you are responsible for "working" the land?

- Now, using the same analogy, imagine that God comes up to you and says, "Remember, don't try to do the work alone. I'll empower you. Let me do the work *through you*."
 - A) How should you respond to God here?
 - B) Would you say that God is in some way responsible for "working" the land?
 - C) So who's responsible for working the land then, you or God?

- The verb Paul uses for "work out your salvation" is the same verb used to "work a field." Working out your salvation probably refers to cultivating your spiritual life with the Lord (growing in regards to your "sanctification"). What's interesting is that God says to the believer, "work," but He also says that He is the one "at work" in them. This is a great passage demonstrating both human responsibility and divine sovereignty. God expects our obedience, but He also acts as the source of our strength, power, and ability to obey. He provides us unimaginable strength through the Holy Spirit, but we must be willing to depend on the Spirit for strength, not ourselves. **Are you depending upon the Holy Spirit to work in you, to change your heart, to change your will, to give you the strength to accomplish the tasks God expects of you?**

2. **READ John 15:5** Jesus: "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing." How might this verse relate with **Philippians 2:12-13**.

FAMILY PRAYER: Lord God, may we depend on You for strength to live out our faith. Thank You for providing the incredible privilege of being Your children through the death of Your Son. Give us discernment, so that we may effectively bring forth the fruits of our salvation and shine as Your lights in the world. Give us strength to shine with Your grace, Your power, and Your humility, Amen.