WEEK 04 · PHILIPPIANS 2:12-30

A true understanding of salvation will lead us to work it out with reverent fear, evident in our selflessness and readiness to endure suffering.

Preface

Last week, we learned about the importance of unity. The key to this is demonstrated in Christ and His humility.

This week, we will read about the need to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. This is illustrated in the actions of Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Background: This passage highlights two significant figures: 1) Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman and a Greek father, who was chosen to accompany Paul on his second missionary journey due to his strong character (Acts 16:2) and later led the church in Ephesus.

2) Epaphroditus was likely a leader in the Philippian church. He brought Paul a gift during his first imprisonment in Rome and intended to assist him there, but he fell seriously ill. Though the Bible does not specify his illness, it nearly caused his death.

Warm-up question: If you could have a meal with any person in history, who would it be and why? (Cannot choose Jesus)

Study

Read Philippians 2:12-18 to answer the following questions.

1. What does Paul's instruction to the Philippian church to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling" (2:12) reveal about our relationship with God and the value of our salvation?

> Notes: The attitude of fear and trembling arises from the awareness of God's greatness and holiness compared to our sinfulness and limitations, as well as the value and cost of His salvation plan fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This posture is not inconsistent with having joy and confidence in the Lord.

2. Do you think Paul's statements, "it is God who works in you" (2:13) and "continue to work out your salvation" (2:12), are contradictory? What is Paul teaching about the relationship between God's work and our efforts? (2:12-13)

3. What attitude did Paul encourage the Philippian church to adopt? How did he exemplify it, and how was Paul able to have that resilience? (2:14-18)

Read Philippians 2:19-24 to answer the following questions.

4. Paul says he has "no one else" like Timothy, what specific character traits does Paul commend in him? (2:20-22)

5. What do you think are the "interests of Jesus Christ" that Paul refers to? (2:21)

Read Philippians 2:25-30 to answer the following questions.

6. How did Paul speak of Epaphroditus? What is the purpose of Paul describing him this way, and why is it important for the church to honor those who serve sacrificially? (2:28-30)

7. In what ways do the examples of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus illustrate their reverent attitude toward salvation? How do these individuals reinforce the command to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling”?

Application

1. What specific actions can we take to cultivate a greater awareness of His workings in us as we work out our salvation with fear and trembling?

2. What situations or circumstances tend to provoke your grumbling and complaining? Can you share examples, and how do these reactions affect your relationships?

3. How can we learn from the examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus? What is one character trait in them that you would like to develop further?

Optional Follow-up Exercise: Learn from the Saints

Paul encourages the Philippian church to honor individuals like Epaphroditus and Timothy, who suffered for Jesus Christ. A common leadership principle states, “celebrate what you wish to replicate.” By honoring our faith heroes, we cultivate the traits that helped them remain faithful in adversity.

This is why the Catholic Church honors and celebrates saints, designating specific days for various saints and a day for all unsung saints (All Saints’ Day). On these occasions, services include scripture readings, hymns, prayers, and reflections on the deeds of specific saints. In this activity, your group will engage in a mini version of this tradition by teaching each other about various saints.

Instructions:

- Assign different saints to people in your group. Here are a list of notable ones that you can assign:
  - Saint Sebastian (celebrated Jan 20)
  - Saint Valentine (celebrated Feb 14)
  - Saint Patrick (celebrated Mar 17)
  - Saint Mark (celebrated April 25)
  - Saint Catherine of Siena (celebrated April 29)
  - Saint Joseph the Worker (celebrated May 1)
  - Saint Anthony of Padua (celebrated June 13)
  - Saint Jerome (celebrated Sept 30)
  - Saint Therese of Lisieux (celebrated Oct 1)
  - Saint Nicholas (celebrated Dec 6)
- Give each person 5-10 minutes to do a quick research on their assigned saint with specific instructions to figure out why they received sainthood.
- Go around and have each person present on their assigned saint and share one lesson they learned from researching them.
- Conclude your time with prayer.