

**Hold Fast to the Word
Philippians 2:12-18**

August 12, 2018

12 Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. 14 Do all things without murmuring and arguing, 15 so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world. 16 It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. 17 But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you 18 and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me.

The Scripture was written by the apostle Paul while he was in prison. He first came to Phillipi in the year 52 while on his 2nd missionary journey (the story is found in Acts chapter 16). In the letter to the Philippians the apostle Paul appeals to the readers to live according to the gospel. If there is anything that Christians are to do it is to live by the gospel. Recently someone (who is not a member of the church) asked me "do you preach the gospel?" I thought "what else?" I said "of course, come and see, come and find out." He said he would but like so many others I don't think he will.

There are several lessons in Today's Scripture. The sermon is classified as a verse by verse sermon. Each verse is addressed individually in chronological order. Verse 12 *Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* The apostle Paul addresses the readers as beloved. This is like a very dear friend. It shows a relationship that is cordial, sincere, and warm. He reminds them of their obedience but it is not a matter of obeying Paul, it is God that we obey. Obedience to Paul is important because Paul is an agent through whom God's commandments are channeled. So, in obeying Paul's instructions and teachings they are obeying God. Paul reinforces obedience to affirm the next point "just as you have obeyed me ... work out your own salvation." At first - I had trouble with this. What does he mean "work out your own salvation?" Isn't salvation a free gift of God's grace? It is not earned. So, how do you work out your own salvation? What he means is that you are to live your life according to God's grace. It is up to you to accept the word, to accept Christ, and to live according to the Spirit. When you live by the Spirit there are behavioral expectations. God's gift of grace is free but it requires a response that is appropriate and necessary. Do so with fear and trembling is not a matter of being afraid of God. Fear and trembling is a biblical expression that appears frequently. It is an appropriate attitude in the presence of God.

Verse 13 *for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* It is all about pleasing God. Our goal, our will, our work, is to please God. Your life ambition should be to please God. Our work that we do is the work of God within us. Verse 14 is one of my all time favorites, it is most definitely Scripture that we should all live by *Do all things without murmuring and arguing.* Everything we do should be done without complaint - no murmuring and no arguing. Why is this so hard to do? This is one Scripture we need to remember copy and paste on mirrors. Highlight it and underline it in your Bible. Not everyone will do that. Some teach not to mark in the Bible. I respect that. I was taught that as a child. Personally, I prefer to highlight & underline. I want to wear a Bible out. There are a lot more Bibles in print than there are Bibles that are studied. I think it is more important to study your Bible and wear it out. Remember do all things - everything - without murmuring and arguing. In life daily life we run across people that need to hear Philippians 2:14 over and over again. If you are going to hold fast to the word you will obey the Scripture.

Verse 15 tells us why. *So you can be blameless and innocent.* That's the goal. Remember your #1 goal in life is to be right with God. The Bible says everything you do is to be done without murmuring and arguing so that you may be blameless. So, to be right with God there are to be no complaints and no arguments. What the Bible calls for is attitude reconstruction. I am going to change the wording a little and repeat that. The Bible calls for a reconstructive attitude. *Blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world.* As children of God we are to be blameless and innocent, without blemish and without fault. This means you, as a child of God, have to stay true to the word in a crooked and depraved generation. I can't emphasize enough the challenge of being a Christian in this world; to stay pure in a depraved society. Christians must live without blame in our environment this means we are to go against the mainstream of society because the mainstream of society is going its own way instead of God's way. You shine like stars ways the same thing as you are the light of the world. You set the example for others to follow.

Verse 16 *It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.* This is what the lesson is all about - holding fast to the word. To be true to the word takes dedication and commitment. In the Bible the Israelites frequently complained. Christians do not because Christians follow Christ. We live by the attitude and action of Christ. We live as Israel was called to live but failed to live. We live as God's blameless, innocent, and pure children. When someone brings a complaint to you. Give them the guidance of the Holy Word. Remind them of their heritage as a child of God and as such we are to hold fast to the word. If we are to hold fast to the word that states do everything without murmuring and arguing then complaints should never bother you because it is not about you. The complaint comes from someone that is failing to hold fast to the word.

Verse 17 *But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.* Who knows what libation is? Libation is a drink that is poured out as an offering to God. Libation portrays an image of a sacrificial ritual. The apostle Paul offers himself as a sacrifice, an offering to bring the faith to the people or to bring the people to the faith. Verse 18 *and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me.* Here we have another biblical reference of the joy of our faith. It is always a joy - never duty. The apostle Paul is an excellent example. He was held in prison facing execution and he re reflects on joy and gladness. In contemporary life people quit over the simplest of setbacks and hurt feelings. Whereas, the apostle Paul rejoiced in the face of persecution.

Gracious action demands a response. It is the obedience of faith. The gracious action is God's action of giving us the free gift of salvation. Our response is to live a life that is based on the principles of our faith; it is to live in a community of believers. The people of God are not a collection of individuals; we are a community which makes up the body of Christ. We are to live in a manner that is worthy of the gospel of Christ. If we are in Christ then we share the attitude of Christ. We are to be focused on pleasing God. Christians in the modern world are faced with innumerable ethical dilemmas. Paul does not give us precise guidelines on what to do with modern challenges in particular situations. The basis for all of our actions is to live a life in Chris. We are to live by his example and lessons. We are to live by the word of God. We are to hold fast to the word.