**Philippians 2:12-30 – Being A Light For God And Investing In Others**

Last week we looked at the **first 11 verses of this amazing chapter** and today we are going to wrap up, **Phil. 2**. We are going to pick up at **vs. 12**. We will divide the chapter into two parts, **vss. 12-18** and **vss. 19-30**. The latter part we will make just some comments because in that portion of **Phil. 2** Paul is talking about Timothy and Epaphroditus, two individuals who ministered with him and to the Philippians.

But let’s jump right into **vs. 12**. Paul has spoken earlier in the chapter about unity in the church, the attitudes we are to have as seen in **vss. 1-4**, the servant heart of Jesus seen in **vss. 5-11** that we are to emulate by serving others and now the author continues his thoughts.

He begins with **“Therefore”** in **vs. 12**. This word is a conjunction, joining the previous discussion with what follows. And it is known as a **“logical inference”** meaning that this conjunction **“Therefore”** is **“A coordinating conjunction that conveys a deduction, conclusion, summary, or inference to the preceding discussion.”** Here is what Paul wants us to remember that helps with unity and serving.

**1) Never stop learning.** So, based on what Paul has said in the first **eleven verses**, he then tells us that we are to **“work out our own salvation...”** Is Paul teaching a works salvation here? No. He has already made it clear regarding being a Christian and that God was at work in our lives **(Phil. 1:6)**.

But, following on **vss. 1-11**, Paul says we are to live out what we have just read. For the most part, the Philippian church had obeyed and submitted to the Scriptures, and now Paul is encouraging them to continue in that vein.

The word **“work”** is a command. If there is disunity and there was some at Philippi, Paul’s command to live out what he has been writing earlier will help in fixing the problem of disunity if people were willing to listen to him and more importantly, God’s Word.

The word **“work”** means **“to effect, produce, bring out as a result”** but it is, again, not talking about earning our salvation. As **Warren Wiersbe** notes,

**“The verb “work out” carries the meaning of “work to full completion,” such as working out a problem in mathematics. In Paul’s day it was also used for “working a mine,” that is, getting out of the mine all the valuable ore possible; or “working a field”…The purpose God wants us to achieve is Christlikeness, “to be conformed to the image of His Son” (**[**Rom. 8:29**](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro8.29)**).”**

We are to put into practice with the help of the Holy Spirit what God has done in us. And let’s not be thrown off by the words **“fear”** and **‘trembling”** as if we must worry about God judging us or looking down on us. The point is our salvation is seen in what we do and in what we say.

The word **“fear”** has the idea here of **“awe”** or **“respect.”** A respect of God should be a catalyst for us pursuing holiness. We are to respect God and the idea of **“trembling”** means seeing a solemn responsibility that we have and then doing something about it. Our lives are to reflect what we claim and when we pursue holiness, a life that honors God, there will be unity within the church.

**Vital: Vs. 13** reminds us that we are not in the growth process alone. God is there to help us, in fact, ultimately, He, through the Person and Power of the Holy Spirit, is working in us, for His will and His good pleasure. It is about bringing glory to God. He gives us the ability to live as we should through the new life He has given us **(2 Cor. 5:17)**. What an awesome truth, that God helps us to be what we are called to be as His followers. He empowers to live the life of a Christian. We must study, pray, serve, care.

In **vss. 14-16**, Paul reminds us of our attitude, of how we are to live in the world of today. Let’s see what he has for us,

**First**, **vs. 14** tells us that we are do all things without **“grumbling”** or **“disputing.”** Grumbling. This seems to be a major trait in our society. The word means **“murmuring, secret discontent, complaint.”** It is the “standing off in the corner” griping to whoever we can about whatever we can.

Some people just complain, and often it revolves around, not the Word of God, but their own opinions and thoughts, agendas. They look for others who will share in their discontent.

**A.T. Robertson** points out that grumbling leads to **“disputes.”** The word **“disputing”** can mean **“an opinion, a thought.”** **Thayer** here says it means **“a deliberating, questioning, hesitation, doubting.”** Grumbling causes disunity and at times doubting, and hesitation in people who are trying to follow the Lord because someone is causing problems through their discontent. Grumbling affects people.

It also has the idea of people arguing over things, disputing with each other. In its most often use, this word for **“disputing”** refers to the internal thoughts of an individual. In every case, it refers to evil thoughts **(Mt. 15:19; Mk. 7:21; Rom. 1:21)**. This is noted by **William Mounce**.

There is nothing positive about it. Think how destructive this attitude is. It is crucial for us to guard our hearts, isn’t it. Complaining and griping, arguing, causing disputes, wears people down. It just does.

Now, let us look at **vss. 15-16** where Paul tells us how we should be. Instead of grumbling and complaining, we are to live out what we have seen in the first eleven verses of this chapter, and when we do, here is what we are to do:

**2) Live a blameless life (vs. 15).** This does not mean a perfect life. Let me explain. It has the idea of living and talking in such a way that we do not have to be censured. Our word is our bond. We are not vulgar. We are ethical. Be above board, taking the high road when dealing with situations. It does not mean being a doormat, but it does mean not lowering ourselves to standards that dishonor God.

It is a word that is used only a handful of times in the NT. It is just doing the right thing **(Lk. 1:6)**. Now, people may accuse us of something or misrepresent us, which some will do because they do not like us but in the long run, by living as we should, any lies, statements made about us, are proven to be untrue. Even if someone points a finger at us, like they did at Jesus, what they say, or claim will not be true.

**Practical:** Be a good worker, honoring Christ in what we do. Treat people right. Be ethical in how we handle things. Pay our bills. Do not lie. Do not lower ourselves to respond in negative ways as others do. Take the high road, forgive, let God handle things. Treat people as Christ would.

**3) Live an innocent life (vs. 15).** This does not mean we that we are not aware of what is going on around us. The word means **“free from guile or deceit.”** One writer notes this word as **“pure and unmixed”**, like a high-quality metal without any alloy in it that would weaken it. Basically, it means that we are untainted by sin, living in a way that brings God glory.

**Practical:** Deal with any sin issues we may have. Do a spiritual examination regarding any areas of our life that may be hindering our walk with God. Keep in mind also that we are not called to retreat into our Christian bubble. We are to not be isolated from the world around us that is in so desperate a need of spiritual change. But how we live is important. What do people see in us.

We live in a broken world as Paul notes in **vs. 15** with the phrase **“crooked and twisted generation.”** We are to be lights in this world as **vs. 15** notes **(Mt. 5:13-16)**. The Gospel will offend people, but we often unnecessarily as believers say and do things that do not help the situation or the cause of Christ, and when churches are at each other’s throat, or disunity abounds, people see it.

**4) Actions speak louder than words.** We have said this many times. There is a major drift in churches when it comes to the Bible. People misinterpret, read their own thoughts into it that are far from what it is really saying. Paul, in **vs. 16**, tells us to **“hold fast”** to the Word of life, God’s Word.

The idea of **“holding fast”** here means to **“present as a light, exhibit, display.”** We are to display to others the Word of God. This is a challenge but it is what we are called upon to do. But to do so we must **“hold firmly”** to God’s Word. We hold on to it and we are to live it.

Paul says if we do this we will not have wasted our time and our life **(vs. 16)**. He then speaks of being poured out as a **“drink offering”** in **vs. 17**. Paul used this same picture near the end of his life in **2 Tim. 4:6**. Paul used it twice in the NT to describe the things he went through for the Gospel and how his life had been given in service to God. In the OT they were part of the sacrificial system.

**Mounce** says the word here means **“to make a libation (me - sacrifice, offering) of one’s self by expending energy and life in the service of the Gospel.”** Paul used it as a metaphor of him giving his life for the work of the Gospel. He suffered much for his faith, but he could say when he reached the end that he had finished the race and had honored the Lord.

In **vs. 19** Paul changes gears somewhat. We see his concern for the church at Philippi and he mentions a few things that I want to note as we wrap up. One thing I want us to see is an important point, so I am including it with the previous four.

**5) Be personable and invest in others.** We were not created to live alone, much less serve alone. Paul mentions two people in particular in **vss. 19-30** but it reminds me that Paul never complains about his life. He is too busy talking to people, knowing them, serving with them to complain about his situation.

There is no one way to invest in lives. I have heard people with differing opinions on all kinds of topics when it comes to mentoring, discipling, etc. People and churches do not all do it cookie cutter style. Paul spent time with people. He taught them, he helped them navigate through life, he prayed for them. And at times he was able to spend more investing in people than others. It all depended upon the situation.

Jesus had twelve individuals that He spent most of His time with. They watched Him, He interacted with them. But when someone tells me that there is just one way to do things when it comes to discipleship, I have issues with that. Biblically, people need us to talk to them, to show we care, answer questions, to encourage them, to spend time with them but there is no set “how to’s” in this.

The two individuals mentioned by Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus, are people Paul had put time and energy into. Timothy, I believe, many are familiar with. Paul wrote two letters to him. He was a spiritual son to Paul, though when Paul met him he was already a Christian **(Acts 16:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:14-17)**.

Note the character of these two individuals. This should be true of all of us, to have people speak of us in this way. Paul says that he has no like Timothy, who will be **“genuinely” (faithfully, sincerely) concerned” (feel an interest in, caring (vs. 20)** for the welfare of the Philippians.

Timothy was not just going through the motions. He would check in on the Philippians and bring back news to Paul. Do we have a genuine concern for others? Only we can answer that.

Timothy, though, had proven himself faithful, ethical, caring **(vs. 22)**. He had learned from Paul and was committed to the Lord’s work. Timothy’s **“proven worth”** means that his character was approved, he had shown himself to be someone trustworthy. Over time Timothy had been tried and proven. We need to be people of our word and people who, even when life is hard, we stay the course. Others should see in us a consistent Christlike character. We will make mistakes, but we will not be marked by them.

Then there is Epaphroditus. Paul calls him his **“brother” (in Christ), “fellow worker”**, furthering the cause of Christ, and a **“fellow soldier.”** This indicates that Epaphroditus had been through some difficult times in his ministry as he served the Lord.

Epi had come from the church in Philippi to bring things to Paul **(Phil. 4:18)**, to minister to him in his imprisonment. Though Paul was under house arrest, there were things he needed, and the church sent this man to help Paul out. He was probably a leader, possibly the pastor, of the church in Philippi. We do not know that for sure. He is only mentioned in this letter but note that Paul views him with high regard.

This man became sick to the point of death and he was concerned for the people at Philippi **(vss. 26-27),** and they were concerned for him. He missed the people in Philippi, his church **(vs. 26)**. He was also **“distressed” (uncomfortable, troubled, full of anguish and sorrow)** and concerned that the people at Philippi knew he was okay. This word also described how Christ felt in Gethsemane.

Think about this. There were no emails or phones to make calls on. It was about, some think, a forty-day journey between Rome and Philippi. So over time word got to the church that Epaphroditus had been very sick, and the people were concerned for him. He had ministered to Paul but fell ill. There may have been more to what we are reading than just his unknown illness and how it may have affected what he wanted to accomplish. I think this is important so please listen.

We want to note a few things about the illness of Epaphroditus before we make an important observation. **One**, note that Paul did not heal him. At other times Paul did heal people but in this case he did not. Did this show that maybe this gift was not as prominent as the years went on. Instead of people healing with the gift of healing, prayer went up and God answered according to His will. Just a thought.

**Second**, his illness was not because of sin. The context here makes it clear that he was simply very sick. **Third**, he was not sick because he was out of God’s will.

This man was willing to serve alongside of Paul even in difficult circumstances. Now, there is something I want us to consider that I think it is important as we just noted. It was not Epi’s fault that he got sick and when Paul sent him home **(vs. 28)** he wanted the church to not think poorly of this man as if he had failed in his mission of bringing help to Paul. He was to be honored **(vs. 29)**. He risked much to do what he did.

**Point:** Sometimes when we see things not happen or be completed as we were hoping, even if the circumstances were not anyone’s fault, we could allow frustration to take over. We must guard against that just as the Philippian church needed to be careful of how they reacted to Epi’s illness, recovery, and return to them. He did not fail, and we must be careful in how we respond when things are no one’s fault.

**Vs. 30** is not a put down of the Philippian church which at first glance we may think. Not everyone from Philippi could get over to see Paul. I think the **NLT** states it for us. The last phrase of **vs. 30** in that translation says, **“he was at the point of death while doing for me what you couldn’t from far away.”**

Paul was not on them for failing to help. They had sent Epaphroditus to bring whatever Paul needed and to help the apostle and he became very ill. It was no fault of his own. Paul’s concern and choice, for he was the one who sent Epi home **(vs. 28)**, probably carrying this letter, was that this servant of Christ be treated right and accepted back, not as a failure, but as one, as we noted, to be honored **(vs. 29)**.

**Practical:** We must stay out of our Christian bubble. We need to invest in people, specifically believers, but we also must be personable with all. How else do we make a difference or touch the life of individuals. Help others grow. Invest in them in prayer, encouragement. We only have so much time and we can only do what we do. But do not neglect others. We cannot live in a spiritual foxhole if we are going to win the battle against the enemy.