

Philippians 2:12–18

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[0 : 00] scripture text is Philippians 2, 12 to 18. Please remain standing for the reading of God's word. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ, I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise, you should also be glad and rejoice with me.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning and welcome to Christ Church on this beautiful day where we get to sit with one another and linger over God's word.

Let me pray. Our Heavenly Father, we now give these next minutes to the hearing of your word for the betterment of our soul and for the health of our city and for the glory of your gospel.

[1 : 54] So may we give attention to it. In Christ's name. Amen. There's a phrase. Three words.

You've heard it before. Work it out. It's a phrase a father might say to two of his children who are arguing over the use of a toy at the same time.

Work it out. It's a phrase a math teacher might employ after having explained the theorem to her students.

Work it out. It's a phrase that a manager might enthusiastically put forward to a sales team that's recently been charged with a new strategy.

Work it out. It's something Paul commanded the Philippian church after showing the example of his Lord.

[3 : 18] Work it out. Those are the three words I stand today to speak. Work what out?

Well, there in the opening two verses of our text, he says, Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your salvation.

Work out your salvation and do it with a sense of reverence and awe. In light of the obedience of Christ unto death and his downward descent that brought you salvation, work out yours in like manner.

Work it out. Notice, don't work for your salvation. Work out your salvation. Having been saved, get on with your salvation.

The echo of those phrases about, For it is God who works in you, both the will and the work for his good pleasure. Return from the opening of the letter, chapter 1, verse 6, where Paul says, I'm convinced of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it unto completion.

[4 : 51] And so, as those who have been worked on by God, work it out. Those who are kept by God, keep yourself.

Christ Church, let's work it out. Well, where do we begin? Where do you start?

After you've seen the majestic arc of Christ's love, who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped, but became obedient, even obedient to death, having served us in the humility that reaches the grounds and cascades up to the exaltation of having the greatest name.

Where do we begin? I'm a little bit surprised. Verse 14. Begin with words.

With words. Do all things without grumbling or disputing. In particular, we begin with our words.

[6:17] We work out our salvation, which has been wrought inside of us through Christ, through the words which go forth from us in the name of Christ.

Do all things without grumbling or complaining. It's surprising here. Words are the starting blocks for your marathon that will end in your reward in heaven.

Words expose the state of your soul. The words which you speak reveal the condition of your mind. Words are your x-ray that exposes all the interior makeup of your heart.

If your heart has been changed by Christ, words will reflect that change. It's interesting. There's an echo here in verses 14 of Israel's inability to work out the salvation God had given to them during their wilderness years.

[7:42] Even the word grumbling or the idea that they were to have been blameless or without blemish. Or the notion here that he's borrowing upon from the Old Testament that you are in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.

All of these words are in reference to the unbelieving state of Israel through those wilderness journeys, having been saved by God, unable to work out the salvation that had been wrought for them.

Just think of it, Deuteronomy 32:5. They've dealt corruptly with God. They're no longer his children because they are blemished. They are a crooked and twisted generation.

Or verse 15. Jerusalem grew fat and kicked and grew fat, stout and sleek. Then he forsook God who made him and scoffed at the rock of his salvation.

And all of this in contrast to what God had done for them in saving. Verse 6. Do you thus repay the Lord, you foolish and senseless people? Is he not your father who created you, who made you, who established you?

[8:57] Remember the days of old? Consider the years of many generations. Ask your father and he will show you. All of these images about working out their salvation are in contrast to Israel as an unbelieving generation.

Let me bring it forward. The Christian church is to stand out by way of contrast from the unbelieving congregation.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing. But it's so easy to grumble, isn't it? Is it not our proclivity to enter into disputation?

On almost anything. Weren't we born with an oppositional disorder? Don't we truly know what is best for all?

And the motivations that are within all? We grumble. We dispute. Therefore, we are blemished.

[10:14] And we reflect the image in the mirror of a crooked and twisted church. That's disbelieving and not believing. Let me put it to you this way.

Our speech will reveal the restive or at rest nature of our soul. Our speech often reveals the restive nature of our soul.

That nature that just can't keep quiet. We're a disquieted people.

That restive nature of a soul that is always on the verge of somehow being uncontrolled. I just can't help myself.

I've got to say it. Work it out, Paul says. Where do I begin?

[11:16] We ask. With your words, he says. Without grumbling or disputing.

How did Israel grumble? How might it relate to our own nature? They grumbled against God first.

Our speech disputes the activity of God.

They wanted to know after leaving Egypt whether or not God was with them. And so all of a sudden they began to say, is God really with us? I don't think he's with us in this.

Can't possibly be with us. They grumbled against God. They grumbled against Moses. When are you going to do something that will comfort us?

Why is it that you brought our backs to the wall that is obviously impassable by any human means by us? Korah stands and says, what is it with you, Moses, that your word is where we ought to go?

[12:21] I believe in the priesthood of all believers and all of our word is equal to your word. And therefore, I will go. They grumbled against God.

They grumbled against Moses. They grumbled against one another. Moses' full-time job description in the wilderness for 40 years was to do nothing other than adjudicate law cases as people came to him because they had something to say about someone else in the congregation.

Finally, his father-in-law comes and says, you cannot be doing this. I didn't call you to practice law all day. Get other people who can practice law to adjudicate the cases, the grumbings, the right and the wrong things that are being entertained by the congregation.

And what about us? Are you without food, water, provision? Do you grumble against God?

Our words either help or hinder our present witness. That's what it's saying. Take a look.

[13:37] Do all things without grumbling or disputing that so that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of the crooked generation among whom you shine as lights in the world.

Our words either help or hinder our present witness. The contrast is as great as light is to darkness. Our words are a reflection of our heart, which is enlightening to the eyes, refreshing to the soul, helpful to the context in which we live.

Or they are words which are the self-inflicted injury that the church causes upon itself. I don't know that I've seen a generational moment quite like I've seen most recently, particularly with the advent of something like social media.

Social media. Social media within the church is in some sense the untamed tongue of a disquieted heart.

[14:52] Our words are either building up or they are tearing down. Work it out.

Our words. If the common thread of discourse of someone you're speaking to is more often than not being pulled by their needle of ongoing dissatisfaction, I can almost certainly tell you that the garment they are weaving is not worth your wearing.

And so have discernment. Right of the heart. So does the church speak.

Not only our words, but but look, it's God's word work it out. Our words 14 and 15 work it out.

God's word for 16 holding fast to the word of life. In one sense, he's saying there's some words you just got to let it go.

[16:16] When it comes to the word of life, you better keep a strong grip on that gospel. And that's the irony, isn't it?

It's easy as a Christian community to be capable of letting go of the gospel. And yet retaining all of our own criticisms of others.

Whereas we ought to be letting go of some of the unhelpful criticisms and grabbing hold to the word of life.

That's the way you participate in the activity of God who has already saved you in Christ. He who has saved you wants you to work out your salvation.

You work out your salvation by paying close attention to your words and by never letting go of his word. And there's a benefit here.

[17:16] Not only is the benefit of our words helping our witness to shine as lights in the world, but the benefit of holding on to his words, at least for Paul here, is that he would be proud that he didn't run in vain or labor in vain.

Your words, your words shine as lights. God's word held by you makes Paul smile.

And the benefit of your words to the present have an apostolic benefit to Paul in the future. When I arrive, he says on that day, on that future day, and for him, it might've been very near.

He wanted to be proud of all that he had done. He wanted to have given birth to something that grew up into maturity. He didn't want to participate in an activity of saving that actually was vain and useless.

Work it out. Work out what? Work out your salvation. Where do I begin? With my words.

[18:33] May they edify the body. Where do I begin? With God's word. May you hold fast to the unchanging gospel of life.

Who do I look to in this? I have no role models in my family. Paul says finally, verses 17 and 18.

Well, you can look to me.

Even if I'm being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I'm glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise, you should also be glad and rejoice with me.

Paul, in a sense of saying, I've got it right. I'm glad. I'm rejoicing. You should be glad. You should rejoice.

And think of the circumstances that he was in. He had almost completed the working out of his own salvation. He went to bed day by day wondering if the next day would be the day of his death and his execution.

[19 : 35] He did not know the outcome of his trial or his situation. But even in that closing moment of his life, he was glad. He was rejoicing.

And he says, and what I have, so should you have too. What I have in the indicative, I'm glad, I rejoice.

I'm giving to you by way of the imperative. Be glad. Rejoice. What a great word for the church today.

Therefore, my beloved. Christ Church Chicago. As you have been saved by the gospel of grace. Work out that salvation. We can check our progress. When we look at our words.

[20 : 37] What are we doing with our own? What are we doing with his? And what does it say about the state of our own soul?

Our Heavenly Father. We're going to need strength and empowering. Filling. Of the Holy Spirit. To overwhelm our own speech. For our words are many. And often they do harm.

But your word is fixed. So help us to hold it. And continue to give us people, even in our midst.

Who like Paul. Are examples. Of those who knew. How to get down. To it. We ask this all in Christ's name.

[21 : 37] Amen. Thank you.