

Philippians 2:12-18 (PM)

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[0 : 0 0] Well, I'll admit, in this beautiful May-long weekend, I am thinking of the All In. If you don't know what the All In is, it's a retreat.

That if you're in grade 6, all the way up to university, you're invited to go to the most beautiful place in the world, Howe Sound, Anvil Island. 106 people are there right now just basking.

I can't even imagine what they're doing right now, probably swimming in the ocean. Maybe not, but I would be. I was involved in the youth ministry for a long time at this church, 13 years, and it was one of the happiest seasons of my life.

And I wonder, in your life, can you think of a season, a time, that you just remember fondly, you just remember joy? And I was thinking about it as I was jealously wishing I was at the All In this weekend.

And I think part of the reason that season was so happy is because we saw so many people come to faith. I don't know if you realize this, but about 15 years ago at St. John's in this service in our youth ministry, we kind of witnessed a little mini revival.

[1 : 1 3] It's this working of the Spirit where people were just brought to faith. I saw friends of mine who just had absolutely no interest in the Christian faith, brought into this community, encountered Jesus for the first time, and are following him now 15 years later.

And it just fills me with joy. And I think on it, and I think, what happened back then, 15 years ago, in the youth ministry, in the evening service, that caused this incredible influx of evangelism?

What was going on that made people come and see the Lord? A few months ago, we had a vestry meeting. It was very official because it is. Once a year, we have this ministry meeting, and we developed these beautiful booklets that some of you maybe were given four months ago and have long since lost.

But in it, our trustees, our governing body, outlined four priorities for St. John's. And do you know what number one was? Priority number one? Evangelism.

Evangelism is what I'm in charge of here. It's a fancy Christian word if this isn't your normal environment. It means sharing our faith with people who have never heard it before.

[2 : 2 9] Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with someone who doesn't know it. And I've been thinking about my time 15 years ago, and I've been thinking about the priorities and thinking about my current job, and I'm just thinking, how do we as a church become a place that is defined by evangelism?

How do we become a space where people will come and will encounter the living God, encounter Jesus, encounter the hope we have in him?

And that's what our text is all about tonight. Philippians 2, verses 12 to 18, tells us how it is that we can come to shine as lights. And what we'll see is that the way to shine as lights into a world of darkness is through following Jesus.

Discipleship is what causes evangelism. So that's where we're going together. Last week we saw how Jesus is the way.

And this week we see what we need for the journey. This week of our text, it's all about following Jesus together in response to his gospel.

[3 : 40] We heard the gospel last week and it was beautiful. This week is about working out our salvation and advancing the gospel by shining as lights.

In our text, Paul gives two commands for what we are to do and then two images of what we are to be in response to what Jesus has done in achieving our salvation and being exalted by the Father.

So two imperatives for living and then two images for being. The two imperatives or commands are in verse 12 of Philippians 2. Therefore, because of what Christ has done and what God has done in response, Therefore, Paul writes, my beloved ones who I love, as you have always obeyed, so obey now.

Not only in my presence, but much more in my absence. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. The first command is to obey.

As Christ the Father, as Christ obeyed the Father by submitting to death on the cross to achieve our salvation, so we are now called in response to obey Christ as our Lord.

[4 : 54] Jesus is now our master in light of what he and the Father have done. So we need to obey him as our master. To believe in Jesus, to declare Jesus is my Lord and my God, compels us to submit to him.

To believe Jesus is Lord requires us to then become his servants. You can't say Jesus is your master if you're still living as if you're your own master.

No one can have two masters. To believe Jesus is Lord means that you believe he is your Lord. He's your master. And so you now obey him above all else.

Your allegiance to Christ and his gospel now outweighs your allegiance to anything else. Any desire. Any dream. Any person. Any passion.

Any profession. Any idol. Any interest. Any? Anyach beleist. Anyμo. Any, zodiac, there are two liable generations for the past? Any life. Can you submit to Paul my King?

[6 : 01] Any year and edict if we can call accept poth. Aussie is doesn't care, gefunden? Amen. What Hey.

■■ would you know our confession and a great people? Oh my Lord. First one. We nombre a marcher. Wele.ter■ come on grace ar■ousa and but as a big oil. The wind on a gysei Rogers that they serve away so■. It's not a blabst or a couple of JOE.

And in our field within peace are not sure that you've known foridiets may hallinaam and thank you. Taken on its own, it sounds like Paul is saying we need to earn our salvation. We need to work to deserve God's favor and grace and therefore earn our salvation in Christ.

That's what the term appears to mean, in total isolation. But Paul doesn't write this in total isolation. He commands it in the context of everything he's just said.

He's just spent the previous five verses telling us about the gospel, explaining to us what Jesus has done in order to save us. So this command to work out your own salvation is not about earning salvation.

[7 : 06] It's about applying your salvation into every area of your lives. Paul, in essence, is saying, here's the gospel. Here's who Jesus is and what he's done for you.

Therefore, now work out the implications of the gospel. In your own lives. Our salvation is from God. Chapter 1, verse 28 of Philippians says that explicitly.

But here Paul invites us to participate in the working out of our salvation. It's about how we are to respond in light of being saved by Christ.

And to absolutely avoid any confusion, Paul clarifies in the next verse. Listen. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Verse 13.

For it is God who works in you. Both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Paul wants the Philippians to work out the reality of their salvation in their own lives.

[8 : 08] To apply the gospel in how they live and how they relate to each other. But he ensures that they understand it's God's work that is enabling their work. It is God who is at work in you.

Who is enabling and energizing and propelling you to work for his good pleasure. Paul is referring here to the work of the Holy Spirit.

After you hear the gospel and you receive it. And in faith you proclaim Jesus Christ is Lord. Christ gifts you with God's Holy Spirit.

Who begins a work in you of enabling you to now work out your salvation. And to obey Christ. As you set out on the way of Christ.

Following him. The Holy Spirit enters you. He dwells within you. And he starts transforming you step by step. Into the image of Christ. This work of the Holy Spirit is called sanctification.

[9 : 07] It means to be made holy. And it's what Paul is referencing here in verse 12. Our salvation is comprised of two things. Our justification which is achieved by Jesus.

And our sanctification which is empowered by the Spirit. Justification is the work of God the Son. Dying to save us. Dealing with our sin.

Forgiving and atoning for it. And then resurrecting to offer us eternal life in him. Justification is exclusively Jesus' work. It's not ours. We weren't even born yet.

We've done nothing to deserve it. And we don't earn it. We receive justification as a gift of grace. By faith in Christ. Sanctification is the subsequent work of God the Holy Spirit.

Entering us and transforming us into the image of Christ. Once we are justified in him. And it's this second work of salvation. The work of the Holy Spirit.

[10 : 09] That we are now invited to participate in. In verse 12. As Paul puts it in verse 1. At the beginning of this chapter. He says we participate in the Spirit.

We get to participate in the Spirit's work of sanctification. Of being made like Christ. As his Spirit works within us. So Paul is saying be in step with the Spirit.

Participate in the work of the Holy Spirit. That he is doing within you. Obey Christ. That's what the Holy Spirit empowers you to do. Thereby working out your own salvation.

Your own sanctification. Alongside God. Who works in you. This is an invitation to be a disciple of Jesus. His student.

His follower. Striving to learn from Christ as your teacher. And embody him as your example. And this work of discipleship. Of sanctification. Is fueled by God the Holy Spirit.

[11 : 09] Working within you. Beside you. And through you. Molding you. And remaking you. Into the image of Christ. So those are the two imperatives. For what we are to do.

In response to the gospel. We're to obey Christ. And we're to work out our own salvation. Empowered by God's Holy Spirit. Two commands in response to the gospel.

And now two images. Of what the gospel invites us to become. Paul paints two pictures. Beautiful pictures. To help us grasp what it looks like.

To obey Christ. And join the spirit. In working out the reality of our salvation together. First. He calls us children of God.

And I love that it was Caleb. Who read God's word for us. It's beautiful. We are called children of God. Look at verse 14. Do all things without grumbling or questioning.

[12 : 07] That you may be blameless and innocent. Children of God. Without blemish. In Romans 8. Paul writes that in Christ. We are children of God.

Through Christ's work. And through his spirit abiding in us. We are adopted. Into the family of God. And since we're adopted. Into God's family.

As full members. We're invited to reflect. Our heavenly father. You are now a child of God. Through Christ. Through his indwelling spirit.

So live resembling God. Develop these family traits. Of the family of God. That you have now been adopted.

Into. What do you think a child of God looks like? What are their characteristics? Well here Paul gets practical. It's a little bit uncomfortable. It's a bit surprising.

[13 : 03] Look at how he depicts a child of God. In verse 14. First. The first thing that defines a child of God. Paul tells us to do all things without grumbling.

Surprising. Grumbling is what the Israelites did. When God saved them from Egypt. Grumbling means outward skepticism. Verbal criticism.

Complaining. And it's like a poison. That contaminates a Christian community. It destroys our unity. It undercuts our leaders.

It ruins our opportunity to witness to the world. So don't grumble. Next he writes don't question. Whereas grumbling is outward criticism.

Questioning is inward skepticism. Questioning refers to our inward thoughts. Don't assume the worst of people. Or be skeptical of their motives.

[14 : 05] Don't let yourself think negatively about others within the church. Or outside it. The result of not grumbling nor questioning. Paul gives in verse 15.

That you may be blameless. Don't grumble about others. But also don't give others any reason to grumble about you. Be blameless in how you behave.

Next he says to be innocent. Again this is the inward reality. Whereas being blameless is the outward expression. Be pure in heart.

Paul preaches. Sanctify your thinking. Have one mind in Christ. And have his mind. As he is a child of God. And has the mind of God.

So too may we be children of God. Without blemish. Without blemish is where a life of obeying Christ. And working out our salvation. And step with the spirit will lead.

[15 : 05] The destination. The trajectory. The goal of our sanctification. Is that we will resemble Christ. Inside and out. Becoming blameless. As he is blameless.

Being perfect. As our heavenly father is perfect. That's the goal of our salvation. That we become children of God. God. And that is our destiny. Empowered by his spirit.

So be a child of God. That's the first image. Take care of how you behave publicly. And how you think inwardly. That you may grow into the reality. That is already yours in Christ. Namely that you may become a child of God.

Blameless before God. By the work of Christ on the cross. And the continuing work of the Holy Spirit. To make you holy. And this leads now to the second image. Paul gives in verse 15.

Be children of God without blemish. In the midst of a crooked and twisted generation. Among whom you. Shine as lights.

[16 : 07] In the world. Our world is so lost. People today are living in darkness. We live in a land of deep darkness.

In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Of wayward. Lost. Lonely. Broken. Hurting.

People. The pandemic has exacerbated the disorder and division and darkness. Of individuals. And society. And it's into this context.

This culture. This exact moment in history. That we are now invited. Full of the spirit. To bring Christ's light. Wherever we go. God made us.

And saved us. And dwells within us. For such a time as this. This is our moment. To shine as lights. In a world of darkness.

[17 : 10] This is the work of evangelism. It's the work all of us are now called to. In response to the gospel. Evangelism is seeing yourself as a jar of clay.

Entrusted with carrying the light of the gospel wherever you go. Bringing Christ and his light and his life. To a world that is dwelling in utter darkness.

Radiate Christ's light. In your office. At home. In the classroom. With your friends.

Your family. Shining as lights. Is loving your neighbors. In a city that idolizes independence and isolation. And is lost in loneliness.

Love people as Christ loves you. Shine as lights. In a dark world. What's amazing is that living a life of discipleship.

[18 : 08] Of following and obeying Christ. And growing in him by his spirit. Naturally. Spontaneously. Will lead to the gospel advancing. If you obey Jesus as your Lord.

And if you work out your own salvation and participation with the Holy Spirit. You will become as children of God. And you will shine as lights. In a dark world.

And the people who are living in deep darkness. Will see his light in you. And will be drawn to it. Discipleship. Births evangelism.

Evangelism. The Holy Spirit empowering you to become like Jesus. Leads the people in your life to see you. To see your purity and your blamelessness.

To notice your lack of grumbling and skepticism. So that when they look at you. They see Christ. People who knew you before. People who knew you before you knew Christ.

[19 : 10] Will see that in Christ. The Holy Spirit is now transforming you. You're a different person. A new creation. A better person. A brighter person.

The Holy Spirit's work of transformation in us is observable. We'll become like Christ when we stick out. And we will stick out. Radiating his light and his love.

Following Jesus because of the work of the Spirit makes you holy. You become set apart. You're different. Because you live now to serve another master.

So your life takes a completely different trajectory than the world around us. And this different orientation towards Christ and his glory causes us to radiate the light of the gospel.

Jesus' strategy for evangelism was discipleship. He took 12 rough, unremarkable, uneducated, deeply flawed, seemingly ineligible candidates.

[20 : 13] And he invited them to follow him. To obey him. And through his Holy Spirit he transformed them into apostles. Into fishers of men.

Into evangelists. Discipleship following Jesus faithfully is what fuels evangelism. Our discipleship fruits evangelism.

It's true of all the great revivals or movements of the Holy Spirit in history. My job as the evangelist here at St. John's is not to bring the gospel to all of Vancouver on my own.

My job is to mobilize Christ's church. Christ's followers. Working with the Holy Spirit within them. To follow him. To obey him.

And in so doing to shine as lights in a crooked and perverse world. My work is to empower you to see yourself as a jar of clay.

[21 : 13] Called upon to carry the light of the gospel wherever you go. To encourage you to radiate the love of Jesus through loving your neighbor. God saves us now to unleash us into a perverse and twisted generation.

I was asked this week. I was at a pastor's retreat. In the middle of a talk, very awkwardly, the guy said, What Bible verse defines your life? And he went around the circle. We're all put on the spot. I'm not going to do that now.

But I immediately knew. I have a verse. Willie, what's your verse? No, just kidding. I heard someone whispering in the front row. I knew right away.

My life verse. My ministry verse is Ephesians 4 verses 11 and 12. This is why I went into ministry. God gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers.

To equip the saints. That's you. For the work of ministry. For the building up the body of Christ. The work of ministry is the work of every disciple of Jesus.

[22 : 20] Every believer. Every saint. Every person who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit is being made holy. And is being made like Christ. See, ministry is your job.

It's not mine. My job is to equip you to do it. To shine as lights. All of us. All of us are evangelists.

Every disciple of Jesus. Every follower of Jesus is called to shine the light of Christ. To do the work of ministry for the building up of the body of Christ.

All of us are children of God who have been gripped by the gospel of God's grace. We're a community of contrast. Light in the darkness. Seeking to serve our city and to shine Christ's light.

The work of evangelism is the work of ministry. And it's the shared work of the entire church. All of us through our unity. Through our humility toward each other.

[23 : 19] In light of Christ and who he is and what he's done. Ought to now collectively shine as lights in the world. So work out your own salvation with God working within you.

And if we do, we will shine as lights in the world. Note those last three words. Shine as lights in the world.

We are commissioned and called to go shine Christ's light out there. To be sent to go into the world. Can you imagine if we all went home.

And we spent the entire week scouring the entire city for every light bulb in all of Vancouver. And we brought all the light bulbs here next Sunday. And we lit them in just this room.

It would be wonderfully, blindingly bright in here. It would be total darkness out there. We're called to shine as lights in the world.

[24 : 21] To radiate the glory and goodness of God in the world. To go to the places of deepest darkness. And to banish the blackness with the light of Christ.

To embody Christ and glow the gospel. In our own neighborhoods. In places of darkness. In the spaces where institutional religion is no longer allowed to go.

See you are commissioned to bring the light of the gospel. Into the spaces that I'm not allowed and certainly not wanted. Into your classrooms.

Into your offices. Into government institutions and meetings. Shine into our universities. And our homes. Go be a disciple in the world.

Follow Jesus as you live out there. And as you do. Obeying him and working out your salvation. You will shine as light. People will see the light of the gospel in you.

[25 : 28] See discipleship leads to evangelism. Because as you follow Jesus. People will see God's Holy Spirit at work in you. And God's Spirit brings life and light.

Wherever he goes. And this is what I experienced in the youth group. This is what they're experiencing at the all-in tonight. To do this work well.

To shine as lights in the world. And to not have our life snuffed out by the forces of darkness. We need each other. It is so hard to be the only Christian.

In a militant secular setting. So support one another. Go with each other into the world. To shine as light. Meet up where you work for lunch.

With people in this parish. Introduce your networks out there. With your friends in here. This is how we shine. Together. In the world.

[26 : 28] But never forget lastly. The source of our light. It's at the beginning of verse 16. We're told. Shining as lights in the world. Holding fast to the word of life.

The way we shine the light of the gospel. Is by always grasping the gospel. We hold fast to the word of life. We never let it go.

It's the good news of God's grace. Revealed in Jesus Christ. What is needed for our unity in Christ. Through our suffering for Christ.

For humility and obedience like Christ. Is to hold fast to the word of life. Because only here do we find God's words. That bring eternal life.

Only in the word of life. Do we find the power of God. For the salvation of everyone. We never let go of these words. They are a lamp to our feet.

[27 : 26] And a light to our path. They are the power of God. We have nothing to share. And no light to shine. Without the good news of the word of life.

Therefore. My beloved. And you are to me. I love this community. My beloved. Obey Christ. And work out your own salvation.

Figure out how God is inviting you today. To work alongside his work. To bring about your sanctification. Obey Jesus as your Lord. Embody your identity as a beloved blameless child of God.

And shine as light. Amidst a dark world. Grasping the word of life. And now father. Send us out into the world.

To do the work. You have given us to do. May your kingdom come. May your will be done. That Christ may be glorified. Amen.