

“Sharing Joy and Hope in Jesus!” #4

Chapter 2: 12 - 13

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose..

- After spending time writing about the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus, Paul returns to the general theme of living “worthy of the gospel of Christ.” He encourages the believers in Philippi “work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” At the same time, he reminds them that “it is God who works in you.”

Does Paul’s encouragement to “work out your salvation” sound strange? Explain. (See Ephesians 2:8,9)

What means does God use as he works in us to fulfill his good purpose?

Chapter 2: 14 - 18

¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”^[c] Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. ¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸ So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

- Once again Paul focuses on the relationship he longs to see among believers. No grumbling or arguing. He goes on to explain what the result of such blameless and pure living will be. They will “shine like stars” against the dark backdrop of sin in the world, all while holding firmly to the word of life. (Some translate “hold out the word of life.”)
- Note the joy it would bring Paul as he received word that the believers in Philippi were shining lights holding to the gospel. Paul uses the Old Testament imagery of a “drink offering” to describe his current situation as he awaits trial in Caesar’s courts. Drink offerings often accompanied burnt offerings and other sacrifices to the Lord. (See Numbers 15 as an example). No matter what it cost Paul personally, he is overjoyed that his labor for Jesus resulted in saving faith for the believers in Philippi.

Can you think of ways that Christians “shine like stars” in the world today? What are they?

Compare Paul’s joy over the faithful believers in Philippi with the joy Christian parents have when their children continue to “hold firmly to the word of life.”

Chapter 2: 18 - 24

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. ²⁰ I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. ²¹ For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. ²³ I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. ²⁴ And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

- Note that Timothy was with Paul in Rome. Timothy was a traveling companion of Paul when Paul first arrived in Philippi. He was well-known to the believers there. He was a faithful minister of the gospel, not like some who were working for their own interests.

Why did Paul want to send Timothy to Philippi? Comment on the importance of learning how the gospel is bearing fruit beyond our local circumstances.

Is Paul right when he says, “Everyone looks out for their own interests.” Explain.

Chapter 2: 25 - 30

²⁵ But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. ²⁶ For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. ²⁷ Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. ²⁹ So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, ³⁰ because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

- Paul now explains why he is sending Epaphroditus back to Philippi. He was sent to Rome with the best of intentions. Yet, through no fault of his own, he became more of a burden for Paul than a help. Note Paul’s concern for the reputation of Epaphroditus and for the believers in Philippi.

Can you think of a time when your plans to give someone aid or help didn’t quite work out as you had planned? How do we react to disappointments in life and ministry efforts?

Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, help us to shine like stars in this sin-darkened world as we hold firmly to the word of life. Use your word and sacraments to keep us in the saving faith. Bless our efforts to share the gospel with members of our families and others in our lives. When we experience setbacks and disappointment, lift us up. Give us the support and encouragement we need to find joy in serving you. Amen.