

Posted June 30, 2020

Read Philippians 2:12–18 in your Bible. I will print the NET–2 translation.

### LIGHTS IN THE WORLD

12 So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, continue working out your salvation with awe and reverence, 13 for the one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort—for the sake of his good pleasure—is God.

14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 15 so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God without blemish though you live in a crooked and perverse society, in which you shine as lights in the world 16 by holding on to the word of life so that on the day of Christ I will have a reason to boast that I did not run in vain nor labor in vain. 17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice together with all of you. 18 And in the same way you also should be glad and rejoice together with me.

### COMMENTS:

Verse 12 begins with one of the most important words in of Paul’s writings: “Therefore.” After Paul has clearly outlined the message of salvation, he then is asking the question, “Now that God has done this for you, what difference should you see in your life?”

In today’s reading he gives three applications expressing how we who believe the gospel should show it in our lives. The first is: Obedience to God (vs. 12–13). Paul is not asking them to be obedient to him, but to God.

The last half of v. 12 also needs a careful examination. What did Paul mean when he said, “continue working out your salvation with awe and reverence?” An important rule of Bible interpretation is “Let the scriptures interpret scriptures.” It is clear that we are not saved by our works. So we have to find another explanation.

What is meant is that we are to focus on our life on living for God. Jewish writings often use the statement: “with fear and trembling.” That is the most common translation, but because the word “fear” means frightened in the minds of most people today, I don’t believe that is the best translation.

Work out means to apply salvation, not to earn it. Fear and trembling means to have proper respect in response to God’s blessing. True obedience comes from reverence, not fright. It was a call to have proper respect for God, not to be afraid of God.

Verse 13 reveals a truth often overlooked today. In America we have a lot of bootstrap theology. You must just get more serious about your life for God and you can be better than you have been. Paul reminds us that the Christian life is also a work of God in us.

The Net–2 translation says it clearly. “For the one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort—for the sake of his good pleasure—is God. God is working to provide the deeper incentive: Christians are recipients of God’s initiatives of motivation and empowerment.

The second application is: Be a Faithful Light for God (vs. 14-16). Grumbling and arguing come from selfishness and vainglory. His emphasis on blameless (complete Christian character) and

pure (inoffensive living) introduce metaphors. First, believers are to be morally faultless in a world crooked and perverted by its failure to understand the word of God.

Believers are straight models for distorted lives. Second, they are to shine like stars whose brilliance contrasts with the darkened world. They are living in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.

The third application is: Our Joy (vs. 17-18). Our joy is found in God, not our circumstances. Paul uses himself as an example. If he is to lose his life for preaching Christ Jesus, he will be glad and rejoice. And he wants the Philippian congregation to rejoice with him. We are free from the curse of sin, death and Satan. He have a reserved place in our heavenly Father's house.

**REFLECTION QUESTION:** The ability for us to live a life honoring God is not found in some hidden spot within us that we can learn to tap. It is found in God can change our desires and move us forward in faith. For that to happen we need to follow God's plan. That plan includes regular worship, Bible Study, participation in The Holy Supper, prayer and asking God the right questions. If you never ask God, "What should I do for you or how can I best serve you? You won't find God tugging on your heart strings and leading you. Follow God's plan to fulfill his purpose with your life. What guidance questions have you been asking God??"