



WEEK THREE (2026 THEME): Philippians 2:1-16

Working Out Our Salvation Together: A Brief Introduction

Our theme for 2026 is taken from Philippians 2:12b, “Dear friends... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” There are two primary aspects that we hope to emphasise over the course of the year. The first is the sense of continuity. We hope to strengthen and develop a number of good things that have begun and hope that this is your experience in your Life Group this year. The second is the corporate aspect of this work. It is something we do together. We hope to continue to foster our sense of community as we engage in our mission and purpose as a community of faith: to see lives changed by Jesus.

Sermon Outline:

A Brief Overview of This Week’s Sermon

Key Text(s): Philippians 2:1-16

“Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.” (Phil. 2:15b-16a)

We’ve all had the opportunity to look at the stars away from the lights of the city. It is an awe-inspiring sight. We are confronted with the vastness of space and the overwhelming beauty of the world. It is no surprise that throughout the ages that stars have been worshipped as divine, believed to have power over the human lives they look down on. More pragmatically, the stars were used to navigate the land and seas for centuries. Star charts traced their paths across the heavens and aided travellers in locating themselves in the vast world.

Unsurprisingly, stars (and light more generally) play an important role in Scripture. The Lord promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars (Gen. 15:5; 22:17). Balaam, the Gentile diviner, saw a star arising to rule (Num. 24:17; see Matt. 2:2). Daniel described the wise, who would rise again at the end of times, as shining stars, leading many to righteousness (Dan. 12:3). All this (and more) is in Paul’s mind as he uses this image to describe his readers and their collective actions as God’s people.

Paul’s imagery is especially appropriate given the state of the world in which his readers inhabit – “a warped and crooked generation”. This alludes to Moses’ song in Deuteronomy 32:5 in which he describes the unfaithful people of Israel. Here, Paul uses it more broadly to describe the darkness in which the believers live. It is, of course, only when the sun goes down and the night comes that we can clearly see the stars.

How do we shine like stars in the midst of this kind of darkness?

Throughout the epistle (and, indeed, all of his writings) Paul provides the Philippians with examples of the kind of life they are to live. It is a life marked by a visible embrace of Jesus’ way (especially in their love for one another – 2:5-11);

persevering in this way of life (1:27; 3:12); living distinctly, not just loudly (3:15-16); and staying connected with Christ (2:16).

The phrase, “as you hold firmly to the word of life” (the condition for shining like stars), can be translated in a few ways that open up fresh insights into the metaphor. Alongside the NIVUK translation – hold firmly – it could be translated as “giving attention” or as “presenting” (holding out). Each of these provide a slightly different emphasis that is helpful to consider.

In particular, we are invited to think beyond persevering in belief, to consider what we are paying attention to or what we are holding out to others. One thing it points to is the active nature of holding firmly. Another is the corporate nature of this activity. This is what we are to do together. It is not an individual exercise!

One way we can work out our salvation together is to include others in what God is drawing our attention to. Not only might this be helpful for us to discern what God may be inviting us to learn, develop, or practice, we may also discern God’s will for us together – themes of what and where the Holy Spirit is at work in the world.

Questions to Ask

1. What does it mean for believers to “shine like stars” in a dark and “warped and crooked generation”?
2. Why do you think Paul connects shining like stars with living out Jesus’ way—especially love, perseverance, and distinctiveness?
3. The phrase “hold firmly to the word of life” can also mean “giving attention” or “holding out.” Which of these ideas stands out most to you, and why?
4. What are we paying attention to right now, and how might that shape the way we live as followers of Jesus?
5. How can we, as a group, help one another “hold out” the word of life to others in practical ways this week?
6. What might God be drawing our attention to personally and together, and how can we discern that as a community?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray for each other in the areas that the Lord is inviting each of you to pay attention to.

Continue to pray for the those participating in Alpha. We ended up with over thirty people registering! Pray that the Spirit would be at work in each participant and for the empowerment of the facilitators.

A Practice to Try

Select one of the things you identified in Question 5 above to intentionally practice this week.

Readings to Read This Week

Read the entire epistle to the Philippians and pay attention to the those things that Paul desire them to “hold firmly” to.

A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

As we come to the end of May Mission Month we have an opportunity to be Big-Hearted in our financial support of our projects. In uncertain times we can easily allow fear and anxiety to constrict our generosity. This year my prayer is that we will demonstrate our trust in the God who provides as we courageously respond to God’s invitation to participate with him in the work he is doing through our partners.

A GBC Initiative to Promote/Celebrate

Each week we will provide you with a key aspect of our community news that we would encourage you to remind your Life Group about.

1. This is the final week of our May Mission Month appeal with the last day to make donations, being Monday June 8. This is an opportunity to financially support the work of God around the world. We encourage people to participate in this appeal – our target this year is a little over \$200,000 – and to give over and above other

financial giving. Please encourage your group to begin to prayerfully consider how God may be inviting them to participate in His work around the world.