



WEEK TWO: Philippians 2:12-16a

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 2:12-16a; Exodus 15:22-26; Deuteronomy 32:1-43; Daniel 12:1-4

This week we continued our deep dive into Paul’s admonitions to his “dear friends” in Philippi. The apostle has urged them to continue to work out their salvation. In other words, to work out the implications of what it means to follow Jesus, especially in their relationships with one another. And for Paul, this is critical. Their relationships are tied to the purpose God has called them into. The importance of this matter is reflected in the example of Jesus (2:5-11), but also in the multiple allusions, echoes, and quotations from the Old Testament. Paul was steeped in the Old Testament.

In verse 14 Paul encourages them to do everything – surely with their relationships firmly in mind – without grumbling or arguing. While there are New Testament examples of grumbling and arguing (notably the disciples among themselves about who was the greatest) Paul appears to have the people of Israel in mind. Beginning in Exodus 15, immediately after their rescue from the Egyptian army, the people grumbled against Moses when there was no good water to drink. This marks the first of a depressingly long list of examples where the Israelites failed to trust the Lord’s ability to provide for them.

What is striking, however, is that this lack of trust is met by a ruling from God (after, it should be noted, providing water for them!) that they are to be obedient. This combination is important. You may remember the old hymn, “Trust and Obey”. If we do not trust someone, we will be hesitant to obey them. The people are urged to trust the Lord and his leading (and remember this is before they receive the Law!). Paul picks this up in Philippians 2. He realises that following the way of Jesus appears counter-intuitive, but he calls his friends to trust and obey. This is captured in “so that you may become blameless and pure”.

It is crucial to note that blamelessness and purity are not the end, but the means to an end. When we get this wrong, and make it the end, we allow self-righteousness and holier-than-thou attitudes to flourish. Instead, our blamelessness

and purity – which are very important – are part of the means by which we achieve the true purposes of God – the restoration and renewal of everything!

Paul moves on to this very purpose when he quotes from Deuteronomy 32:5. This passage is a song at the end of Moses' final speech to the people of Israel in which he reiterates the covenant relationship they have with the Lord. And a covenant relationship is a relationship for purpose. The people were to be the Lord's people and live in relationship with him to lead the nations to the blessed life. The song describes the "warped and crooked generation" as the people of Israel who failed to trust God or recognise his goodness and turned away from him. If the Philippians will trust and obey they will be the true people of God.

And, as such, they will fulfill the purposes of God by "shining like stars" which is an allusion to Daniel 12 where, at the end (and for Paul, Jesus' appearance was a sign of the end), those who imparted wisdom and lead others to righteousness will shine like stars. This impacts how we understand the first part of verse 16 which can be understood as "holding firmly" or "holding out" the word of life. While Paul may have had both perseverance and evangelism in mind, the latter may in fact be a bit stronger.

This is a serious argument for a serious matter. The relationships among believers are mission-critical.

A community of faith that is working out its salvation together is one that is a) committed to the plans and purposes of God; b) characterised by "dear friendships"; c) prioritises trust and obedience as a means to that end; and d) that holds out the word of life to a dying world.

This is what we hope to be as a community of faith.

Questions to Ask

1. Considering the four characteristics of a community of faith working out its salvation together, how would you grade GBC? How would you grade your Life Group?
2. Are there other characteristics that define a community of faith that is working out its salvation together?
3. Trust is critical to obedience that is not duty-bound (in the army, for instance, it is a soldier's duty to obey; trust doesn't really come into it). What does the priority of trust suggest about our relationship with God?
4. Read Deuteronomy 32:1-43. What stands out to you? What questions do you have? What do you think God is saying to you as an individual, a Life Group, or us as a community of faith?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray Commit yourselves to pray for a deepening commitment to each other and the mission of God in our lives together. Pray for our community of faith, that we might commit to "working out our salvation together".

A Practice to Try

This week, practice hospitality. Remember that hospitality is more than inviting someone over for lunch (though it can certainly include this!). It is offering a welcome to another. Consider who and how you can welcome others into our community of faith.

Readings to Read This Week

The following passages reflect on "grumbling and arguing". Consider the interplay between trust and obedience in them.

Exodus 16:1-12

Exodus 17:1-7

Numbers 14:1-9

Psalm 106

Mark 9:30-37

A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

Our three strategic priorities are reflected in our theme: a sense of BELONGING in our mission-critical friendships, our SPIRITUAL JOURNEY as we learn to trust and obey, and COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT as we seek to hold out the word of life

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. Please encourage your group to check their details on GBC Links; to update any details that have changed and to fill in the domains on passions, skills, and interests. This will enable us to invite them to be involved in areas that are more in line with who they are, and, if their details are correct, to invite them!