



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Philippians Lesson 8: Philippians 2:12-18

In our last lesson we saw the ultimate example of what it truly means to be humble and empty yourself to serve others. I hope you spent time really processing the depth of Christ's sacrifice to us beyond just his death on the cross. Paul doesn't just leave us to think about what that looks like on an intellectual level though, he walks us through exactly what that attitude looks like when it is manifested in our lives on a daily basis.

To get an idea of how this whole section fits together, take a minute to read all of Philippians 2.

Read Philippians 2: 12-13.

What is "so then" at the beginning of verse 12 referring back to?

Whenever we see connecting phrases like "so then," "therefore," "but," etc., it is important for us to pay attention to how they relate to the passage as a whole. This phrase "so then" is pointing directly back to Christ and the example of humility He showed us. It's basically saying "Since Christ came and showed us this example..."

If you are a mother or have ever kept children, it's likely that you have taken the

approach that Paul does here (which we find in a few of his other letters as well). He compliments them on their obedience while he's with them but doesn't leave it at that; he continues assuring them that he is confident that while he is away, they will behave in the same way. It's like a mother walking out the door and leaving her children with a babysitter, taking one last minute to remind them in a loving way of her expectations.

What is the command found in verse 12?

The imperative command "work" here is the Greek word *KATERGAZOMAI*. It's not the usual word we think of when we think "work." This isn't the sense of working and toiling, it carries with it the idea of preparation. The way we do this is to be imitators of Christ who obeyed God by putting His will second to others.

What two words describe how we are to "work out" our salvation?



Finer Grounds Bible Study

How can having a fear and respect for God and His high position help us to maintain the attitude of Christ?

According to verse 13 what is the reason we work out our salvation with fear and trembling?

How does a prideful attitude affect the way God can work in your life?

It is no mystery that God loves using His imperfect and broken people to accomplish amazing things in His kingdom. As you search through the pages of Scripture, this theme will repeat itself over and over again. Murderers, liars, adulterers, thieves, God uses them all to bring about His desired end. The one thing these people had in common was a humble spirit that was willing to repent, turn their heart toward God, and put His will above their own. In order to fully serve God and follow His will, we have to put our will in the passenger seat just like Christ did when He emptied Himself and came to earth to serve us.

Another important thing to notice about this passage is the shift in focus Paul is trying to achieve. He wants them to start concentrating on what God is

accomplishing through them rather than on what they are doing on their own. Too many times we become proud of the number of people we have studied with or how many ladies' day's we've spoken at or how many years we have been teaching children's Bible class. A humble attitude always focuses on God's hand in the work of the church instead of putting the spotlight on our own achievements.

Have you ever had a moment of stealing the spotlight from God?

What is one thing you have accomplished that you put too much attention on yourself instead of putting the emphasis on God where it belonged?

How can this self-focus hurt God's work in the church?

What are some practical ways that we can continually shift focus back to the work God has done instead of ourselves?

Read Philippians 2:14-16



Finer Grounds Bible Study

What is the next command Paul gives in verse 14?

“Grumbling” is the Greek word GONGYSMOS which literally means “behind the scenes talk.” The grumbler is someone who rolls their eyes and quietly undermines whatever is going on by gossiping in the background. “Disputing” is the word DIALOGISMOS and means questioning that gives rise to uncertainty or doubt. The person that Paul is describing is continually questioning the way work is being done. This is one who always thinks they have a better way and is more than happy to share their divisive attitude with all those around. We have all worked with people like this, and at times, we have all probably been like this to some extent.

How can having an attitude steeped in grumbling and disputing hurt God’s work?

In what ways is this type of attitude the exact opposite of attitude Christ embodied earlier in the chapter?

How have you witnessed this type of attitude harm God’s work in the church?

What are some ways you have been guilty of grumbling and disputing in this way?

According to verse 15, what is the reason we should “do all things without grumbling or disputing?”

Just like he did in chapter 1, Paul focuses our minds on the ultimate goal of our work together as a church. We are supposed to be lights to the world. We are meant to stand out and look different. There should be something strange and beautiful about us in the middle of this depraved world.

How does grumbling and disputing harm this ultimate purpose?

When we behave in the way Paul describes, we are acting just like the world around us. The gossip, backbiting, and resentful attitudes just make us blend in



Finer Grounds Bible Study

more and more to a world steeped in this behavior. Paul is begging us to reassess our mindset and really focus on the ultimate goal of our faith.

In verse 16, the verb “holding fast” is a participle that describes how to accomplish the previous imperative verb/s (verbs of command). Because there are two imperatives back-to-back in this section (“work out your salvation...” and “do all things without...”), it seems as if this is describing a way to accomplish both.

What are we to “hold fast” to according to verse 16?

How can doing this help us accomplish those two commands Paul issued earlier in this section?

What are some practical ways you can look to Scripture to shift your mindset and develop humility?

What does Paul hope is the result of their “holding fast the word of life?”

Paul loves his fellow Christians dearly. As we saw in chapter 1, if he were to choose what he truly desired, it would be to be finished with his journey and to be in heaven with Christ. However, because he understood how God was using him to help others and bring them to Christ, he willingly labored on, enduring unthinkable hardships, all because of his love for his fellow Christians, and more importantly his love for God.

How would Paul have run in vain?

The toil he is referring to here is the work he did to bring the Philippians to Christ. The way this work would be in vain is if they allowed their petty disagreements to rip the church apart. Paul is hoping that they will heed his words and truly seek to act as a unified congregation so that all he sacrificed to bring them to the truth wasn't for nothing.

Read Philippians 2:17-18

How does Paul describe himself in verse 17?

Why did he allow himself to be poured out in this way?



Finer Grounds Bible Study

What cause did Paul have for rejoicing?

What two commands does Paul give the Philippians in verse 18?

What does “in the same way” refer to?

Just like Paul’s focus was purely on serving others to accomplish God’s will, he commands them to behave in the same way. If we are poured out for others with a self-serving attitude, it can lead to resentment and anger. How dare they not notice all that we have done? However, Paul is asking them to serve others with an attitude of complete humility.

Here are some great attitude-check questions to ask when serving in the church: Would I be serving in this way if absolutely no one knew about it? If someone else got credit for work I did would I be resentful? If someone stepped in to help would I feel territorial about the way things are done? Just a quick, honest walk through these questions can expose our hearts and show us our true motivations. If we are serving in humility, we will truly rejoice anytime God’s will is accomplished,

not just when God’s will is accomplished the way we think it should be.

What are some of the successes you have had so far during this study in cultivating a humbler mindset?

What are some specific goals you have this week after dwelling on our reading?

Be sure to take some time this week to read through the entire book of Philippians at least once in one sitting. This will help enormously in connecting Paul’s thoughts throughout our study. Also, continue to pray that God will soften your heart to be able to see the ways you can develop a more humble, Christ-like attitude.