

# Christian Students Bible Study – Fall 2013

## Philippians - Week 5

### Read: Philippians 2:12-16

In verses 12, 13, 15, and 16 [of Philippians 2] we have four wonderful matters: salvation (v. 12), God operating in us (v. 13), lights or luminaries (v. 15), and the word of life (v. 16). The salvation in verse 12 is actually the very God who operates in us in verse 13. The One who operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure is Himself our salvation. As believers, we are children of God, children of the One who is operating in us. Because we are children of God, we most assuredly have the divine life and divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

Because we are children of God with the life and nature of God, we shine as lights in the world. The Greek word rendered *lights* in 2:15 means “luminaries which reflect the light of the sun.” Every child of God is a stone reflecting the light which comes from Christ, God’s unique Son. In this universe there is only one source of light, and this source is God. As those luminaries, we also hold forth the word of life.

These four important matters are very subjective and experiential. We have received a salvation which is God Himself. Now there is operating in us this very God, the One who is real in our experience as our subjective salvation. He is not dormant, passive, or idle. His operating in us is His energizing in us. How wonderful that we have been born of this energizing God! Hence, we have His energizing life and nature. We are the energetic children of the energizing God! Spontaneously we reflect the light which comes from God as the universal source. In the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, we shine as lights, as luminaries, in the world. Therefore, we can hold forth the word of life to those around us. This is to take Christ as our pattern and to work out our salvation.

### Working Out Our Salvation

How is it possible for us to work out our own salvation? If we could work out our salvation, would that not make salvation a matter of our own works? Suppose I fall into a pit and someone rescues me. That is salvation. But if I succeed in delivering myself, that is not salvation, but my own working. Since salvation is not of works, but of grace, what does Paul mean by telling us to work out our salvation? If we had been the first to utter such a word, we would be charged with heresy.

The salvation here is not the salvation we receive; it is the salvation we work out. The salvation we receive is the salvation from God’s condemnation and from the lake of fire. There is no need for us to work out that kind of salvation. The salvation here in Philippians is salvation of another kind, or of a different degree. It is higher than that mentioned in Acts 16:31, where the jailer is told that if he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, he and his household will be saved. The salvation in Philippians 2:12 is actually a living Person. This Person is the very Christ whom we live, experience, and enjoy.

To work out our own salvation is to carry it out, to bring it to the ultimate conclusion. We have received God’s salvation, which has as its climax to be exalted by God in glory as the Lord Jesus was (v. 9). We need to carry out this salvation, to bring it to its ultimate conclusion, by our constant and absolute obedience with fear and trembling. We have received this salvation by faith. Now we must carry it out by obedience. This includes the genuine oneness in our soul (v. 2). To receive salvation by faith is once for all; to carry it out is lifelong.

## God Operating in Us

Furthermore, following his word about working out our salvation, Paul goes on to say, “For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure” (2:13). The word *for* at the beginning of verse 13 indicates that God’s operating in us is related to our working out our own salvation with fear and trembling. God operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure. Surely the working in verse 13 refers to the working out in verse 12. We may confess that we are not able to work out our own salvation. Yes, in ourselves we are not able. But God, the One operating in us, is able. Since He is operating in us both the willing and the working, we can work out our own salvation. Paul’s word about God operating in us is a further indication that the pattern is subjective as well as objective. Doctrinally, the pattern is objective; experientially, it is very subjective.

In verse 13 Paul goes on to say, “For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.” The word *for* at the beginning of this verse gives the reason we need to obey always. It is because God operates in us. In God’s economy we have the Lord Jesus as our pattern (vv. 6-11), as the standard of our salvation (v. 12), and we also have God operating in us both the willing and the working to carry out our salvation, to bring it to its ultimate conclusion. It is not that we by ourselves carry it out, but that God operates in us to do it. The only thing we need to do is to obey the inner operating of God.

## Shining as Lights in the World and Holding Forth the Word of Life

As lights, or luminaries, the believers shine among those in this crooked and perverted generation. Actually, we have no light in ourselves; we are luminaries reflecting the light of the sun, Christ. Christ is the unique sun, and the church is the moon reflecting Him. Praise the Lord that we have a source of light to reflect!

According to verse 16, the way we shine as luminaries is to hold forth the word of life. It is rather difficult to understand adequately the meaning of the phrase *holding forth*. It means “to present something to people, to offer them something, and even to apply something to them.” To hold forth the word of life is to offer such a word to others, to present it to them, and even to apply it to them. This is to minister Christ to others, to offer Christ to them. What do you offer to your family, relatives, neighbors, colleagues, friends, or classmates? What do you present to them? Your answer should be that you offer Christ to them, present Christ to them, and apply Christ to them in their situation. This is to hold forth the word of life. The word of life is actually the living expression of Christ. To shine as luminaries is to magnify Christ, and to hold forth the word of life is to live Christ.

If we would live Christ, we need to receive the Word into our being and allow it to saturate us.... The only way to live Christ is to be saturated with His word of life. The word of life is the living breath of God (2 Tim. 3:16), the Spirit who gives life (John 6:63). We need to pray-read the Word, receiving the word of God by means of all prayer and petition (Eph. 6:17-18). We need to sing-read the Word, letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom by singing (Col. 3:16). If we are filled with the riches of the living word day by day, spontaneously we shall hold forth the word of life; this is to live Christ that He may be magnified in us.

### Questions:

1. What does it mean for us to “work out our salvation”? (Acts 16:31; Phil. 2:12)
2. What does it mean to shine as luminaries? (Phil. 2:15)
3. What does it mean to hold forth the word of life? (Phil. 2:16) Give examples in your daily life.