

## **“Maturing in Salvation”**

(Philippians 2:12-18):

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### **Introduction:**

It was around this time last year that the EM pastoral staff was dreaming and praying about what our visions and goals should be for the 2007 ministry year. And 2007 was going to be special because it was the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary for Young Nak. And then one of the pastors on our staff suggested funding and building a Habitat home for a needy family in our city, especially as our church was and still is trying to become more active in local outreach. And as that idea was shared, it really felt as if that was what we were to do. Well, as of last Sunday, seven weeks ahead of schedule, and after multiple fundraisers and a ton of personal giving, our church reached the goal of raising \$50,000 for making home ownership a reality for one family in our great city of Toronto. I think all of us can give a collective praise and thanksgiving to God, as well as a humble pat on our collective backs for stepping up to the plate and hitting a home run.

Our journey with local outreach began about 2-3 years ago as I wanted to see us become a church that not only believes the right stuff, but one that really lives out their faith in local missions. If we were to look back just a few years, as a church, we weren't doing much to serve our city. We were on our way to being globally minded, but locally, we were not in the game. But by the grace of God we've taken some significant strides to become a locally missions minded church. Not only have we done the Habitat thing with volunteers and finances, but we also had at least 30 of our people serve with Toronto City Mission. So, as the pastor, I've been really pleased to see many of us step up to this challenge and become more balanced in our faith.

The balance in our faith journey can often times be very elusive. Part of our faith journey includes the inward spiritual disciplines. Those are things like prayer, meditation, solitude, contemplation, worship, character formation. What these things have in common are that they are very inwardly focused. But the other side of our spirituality includes the outward spiritual disciplines such as serving, evangelism, mercy, justice, and missions. As I've said, the balance between the inward and outward disciplines can be very elusive. We often times can easily fall into the trap of leaning heavily to one side and while doing so, we neglect the other side.

As I assess the spiritual life of our church, I think we've come a long way in learning how to express our spirituality outwardly these past couple of years. However, in the process, I think many of us may have neglected some of the inner disciplines. So next year that will be one of the areas we will target as a church – to grow inwardly as we live out our faith in our city and our world. I will be preaching on the spiritual disciplines and on spiritual formation, our retreats will be geared toward those things. There will be seminars offered on how to do QTs. Wednesdays nights will become our bible study nights.

Most all of you know that one of the most fundamental building blocks of our spiritual formation is reading and studying the bible. The journey always begins there and it always returns there. Whenever we get off course, more times than not, we can diagnose our backsliding and pinpoint the exact time of our spiritual struggle to a personal neglect of scripture.

That is why inside your bulletin today, you'll find a bible reading plan, customized for our church, for us to do as a community. Let me introduce it right now and then we'll get into the sermon and return to this plan again at the end of the message.

### ESV Philippians 2:12-18

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

<sup>14</sup>Do all things without grumbling or questioning, <sup>15</sup>that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup>holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. <sup>17</sup>Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

<sup>18</sup>Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

### Our salvation is something that must be “worked out” (12-13).

What does it mean, “to work out our salvation?” This could be a confusing phrase because we've been taught from the beginning that salvation is by grace through faith, right? Take a look at Ephesians 2:8-9.

<sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Even in Philippians 1:28 says that our salvation is from God.

So what does Paul mean here to “work out” our salvation?

Well those of you've who've taken Discipleship 1 will remember the three aspects of salvation.

Saved from the penalty of sin.

Saved from the power of sin.

Saved from the presence of sin.

Salvation is not only something we receive as a one time gift in the past, but it is also something that we live out. So this passage is not about how people become saved, but about what saved people become. They become people who work out or live out their lives as saved people.

What this verse guards all Christians from is spiritual laziness. It guards us from taking on an attitude that would say, “once saved always saved...now I can coast into heaven.” Characteristic of all Christians is that we live out our faith.

Another person said it like this. “*We are not saved by doing good works, but we are saved in order to do good works.*” Does that make sense? Well let's unpack this a bit more.

This passage teaches that the actual ‘working out’ of our salvation is in essence, obedience.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, my beloved, **as you have always obeyed**, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation** with fear and trembling,

The working out of our salvation is something that is done from day one and must be ongoing. “as you have always obeyed, continue...”. It's not like 1 year after you become a Christian, you decide to roll up your sleeves and begin to serve God and obey his commands? It begins from

day one. The moment you become a Christian, things are different. You have a new master. You have a new set of rules to abide by.

The whole call to be a disciple is a call to obedience. Matthew 28:16-18 says...Go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey. So by definition a disciple of Christ is one who obeys Christ.

The proper attitude to have while working out our salvation is “fear and trembling.” “Fear and trembling” is a God directed attitude, not man. It’s not because we fear people that we work out our salvation, but because we fear God. If working out our salvation basically means a life of obedience, then it must be done with great awe and reverence toward God. Some people don’t sin and live holy to please others. Some people don’t sin and live holy to avoid shame. Some people don’t sin and live holy to benefit themselves. But the best reason to live a holy life and not sin is because God himself is holy. And that’s what our attitudes must be.

### Here’s how to do it. (13-18)

Our spiritual growth is a partnership. There is most definitely a part played by us. We have to respond in faith. We have to die to our sinful nature. We have to commit to obey. We have to do the things we need to do. But all of that would be futile if we didn’t have verse 13.

<sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

At the end of the day, our spiritual growth is a work of God. If God wasn’t working in us, then all our efforts to grow would be in vain. Paul understood this partnership in spiritual growth very well. He writes in Ephesians 2:8-10.

<sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Colossians 1:29

<sup>29</sup>For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

1 Cor 15:10

<sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

That’s how every Christian should be living out their lives. We work and labour for God with all our might while God’s mighty power works in us. This is how we live out and work out our salvation.

More specifically, Paul teaches in this passage that the means by which we work out our salvation is through the word of God.

He says...

<sup>14</sup>Do all things without grumbling or questioning, <sup>15</sup>that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup>holding fast to the word of life,

Spiritual growth, a life of obedience, Christ centeredness, discipleship, whatever we call it, it cannot happen apart from the word of God. No one is exempt. We will not grow inwardly or outwardly apart from a regular intake and interaction with God through his Word, the Bible. Pastor and seminary professor Donald Whitney says that 'Bible intake is for the purpose of godliness.'

According to world renowned Christian John Stott this is how the bible benefits us:

- 1) It is God's guide for our lives.
- 2) It shows the way of salvation in Jesus Christ.
- 3) It tells us how to live and continue to live in faith.
- 4) It gives us wisdom for daily living.
- 5) It allows us to get to know God more deeply.

So here are ways we can take the bible in.

Hearing, reading, studying, memorizing and meditating.

So for the New Year, I'd like for us as a congregation to focus on the reading part of it.

"Reading gives us breadth, but study gives us depth." –

Jerry Bridges.

All of us, I think, at one time or another, and preferably sooner than later, need to be able to say, to ourselves, to our Quran reading Muslim friends, to the children that we teach, "Yes, I have read the bible, our holy book, from cover to cover." Don't you think that's important?

Friends, let this be the year, you finish the bible. Let this be the year, that you get back into the bible. If you're already thinking, "it's too much." Or "I'm gonna lose steam in Exodus" you've already lost. Resolve in your heart before God right now to read and finish the bible from cover to cover in 2008.

1. Reading the bible in a year isn't easy, but it's possible.
2. To accomplish this goal you're full devotion will be required and repeatedly tested.

### **Conclusion:**

"Surely we only have to be realistic and honest with ourselves to know how regularly we need to turn to the Bible. How often do we face problems, temptation and pressure? *Every day!* Then how often do we need instruction, guidance and greater encouragement? *Every day!* To catch all these felt needs up into an even greater issue, how often do we need to see God's face, hear his voice, feel his touch, know his power? The answer to all these questions is the same: *every day!* As the American evangelist D. L. Moody put it, "A man can no more take in a supply of grace for the future than he can eat enough for the next six months, or take sufficient air into his lungs at one time to sustain life for a week. We must draw upon God's boundless store of grace from day to day as we need it."

British preacher John Blanchard.