

***“What Working Out Looks Like”***  
***Philippians 2:14-16***

INTRO:

When we were here in Philippians 2 last time, we focused our attention of the application Paul drew from the great condescension and future exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, ***“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”*** (Philippians 2:12–13)

What does that look like in practice? He told us in our text for today a little of how this looks in our lives. He wrote, ***“Do all things without complaining and disputing, in order that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”*** (Philippians 2:14–16) These three verses are one long sentence.

**I. The Exhortation (v. 14)**

**II. The Purpose (v. 15)**

**III. The Means v. 16)**

**I. The Exhortation (v. 14)**

A. Verse 14 is an exhortation. What does working out our salvation with fear and trembling look like?

***“Do all things without complaining and disputing.”***

We work out our salvation by determining that we will live in this present world without ***“complaining or disputing.”***

B. Two questions need to be asked and answered as we look at this verse. First, is this an imperative? Second, is this Godward or manward?

1. Is this a command or an exhortation? The verb can be taken in either way. However, Paul was not giving a good idea here. He is commanding us to determine with God’s help to not allow complaining or disputing to become a part of our lives.

2. Is this Godward or manward? Some spend a lot of time debating this point, but many like me would suggest it is both. When we read these words we are reminded of the Children of Israel in the dessert. Every time there was a bump in the road, they began grumbling and complaining against God and Moses and Aaron. They had little patience and even less faith. One grace we need to grow in is in submission to God. Sometimes blessing after blessing keeps on following us. However, there are times God calls us to

endure or do difficult things. We are not to argue with God when He calls us to endure trouble but to follow the advice of **James 1:2-4**;

***“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”***

We are also not to grumble or complain when it comes to our dealing with people. Do you remember the parable Jesus told in **Matthew 20** of the landowner who contracted with laborers to work all day for a denarius? The ones who worked all day grumbled against the landowner because he did good work with what he had. They felt cheated because of his gracious dealing with those who came late in the day. We must not grumble against others either.

## **II. The Purpose (v. 15)**

A. We must act without grumbling and disputing or arguing, but why must we? Verse 15 outlines Paul and our God’s purpose.

***“In order that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”***

1. God and Paul wanted them to live lives of practical holiness. They needed not only to be blameless in the sight of God, but also blameless and without duplicity in their dealings with one another and those outside the body of Christ. This is difficult for any of us because we are not sinless and pure. We fight sin every day. Still, Paul wrote that working out our salvation included living in as much practical holiness as possible with others in the church and outside the church.

2. Paul desired us to become “*points of light*” in a world dark with sin. Do you remember what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount? **(Matthew 5:16)**

***“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”***

This is the conclusion to our Lord’s discussion of our being the lights of the world.

## **III. The Means (v.16)**

A. Now that we can understand the goal of our working out our salvation with fear and trembling with God helping us with the willing and doing of His good pleasure, is there any tool that God gave us to help in the process? Yes, verse 16 gives us the means through which we can do all of this.

***“Holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”***

B. We do this by holding forth or holding fast to the Word of life. There are two ways to translate this verse. The verb can mean to hold on tight to the Word of life. It could also

mean to hold it forth for someone else to take it. While we may argue in which way to translate it, I think we can take it both ways.

1. The word of God which gives us life in Christ is the source of our standing strong and faithful to God in a difficult world. We must hold on to it tightly like a torch bearer holds tightly to his torch as he carries it. When Martin Luther gave his defense at the Diet of Worms he said, *“My heart is captive to the Word of God.”* That is why he could stand faithful to God in the midst of a situation which would make our hearts melt. Are our hearts the happy captives of God’s unchanging Word?

2. Second, we have to hold it fast to hold it forth to others. We were not given the truth of the gospel to just keep it for ourselves. God invested it in us so we would give it to others drawn to us because of how we live and the reality that we hold. Are we doing that? Are we holding out the Word of life to others?

C. There is a special motivation which made this important to the Apostle Paul. He wanted them to live this way because of what Christ did for them. He wanted them to live like this because God wanted them to live this way. Finally, Paul wanted them to live this way so he knew that they really did believe the Word he preached to them. **(v.16)**

***“So that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”***

Paul wanted them to know that if they lived like this, he would know that God really did save them through His ministry.

How are we living in view of all that Christ did for us?