

Christ Exalted & Held Forth As We Work Out Our Salvation¹

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:9-16; Eph. 1:5, 19-22; Eph. 2:5-8; Acts 2:36; 2Cor. 13:3a, 5; Rom. 8:11

The Crucified Life As Our Pattern

We should take the crucified life in as our pattern (2:5-8) so that we can experience the power of resurrection which exalted Christ to the highest peak in the universe. Such a life stands altogether in contrast to a life of rivalry and vainglory. If we do not take the crucified life as our pattern, we shall automatically live in the way of rivalry for vainglory. Nothing was more troubling to the apostle Paul than to learn that the saints in Philippi were living in the way of vainglory. Taking this crucified life as our pattern opens the gate of resurrection and brings us into the power of resurrection. The exaltation which is of God will never come by way of rivalry or vainglory. The more we seek vainglory, the more shameful our situation will be. Whenever we live a crucified life, God will bring us into the power of resurrection, and in this power we shall be exalted. Often the saints complain of weaknesses. We are weak whenever we do not take the crucified life as our pattern. The gate through which we enter into the power of resurrection is the crucified life.

Exalting Christ In Our Experience: The Highest Standard Of Salvation

God has already exalted Christ (2:9), but have you exalted Him? Christ has been exalted in the universe, but has He been exalted in you? Christ cannot be exalted in us unless we take Him as the crucified life to be the pattern of our daily life. We need to experience Christ to such a high degree that in our life He is exalted in our personal universe—in our daily life, in our family life, and in our church life. Paul's desire was that the saints in Philippi would exalt Christ in their daily living. If the believers had done this, they would have made Paul's joy full.

Paul's concept was that Christ would be exalted not only objectively in the universe but also subjectively and experientially in our daily life. (2:12) After speaking of the crucified life (2:5-8) and the exalted life (2:9-11), Paul says, "So then...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. (2:12) The words *so then* indicate that what Paul speaks of in verse 12 is a consequence of taking Christ as the pattern of a crucified life in the preceding verses. These words indicate that Christ's crucified life should be our experience. It is also true that Christ's exalting life should be our experience. This should be the salvation we work out by God operating in us.

We should not simply be those who are saved, but we should be those who experience Christ in His humiliation and are also exalted through Christ's resurrection power. Now that Christ has been exalted by God to the highest peak in the universe, we need to experience Him also in His exaltation. This requires that Christ be not only our crucified life, but also our exalted life in the power of resurrection. This power is nothing less than the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. (1:19) It is also the power of resurrection (3:10) and the power to do all things in Him who empowers us. (4:13) This power is adequate to enable us to work out our salvation to the highest standard. When we reach this standard, we shall be more than conquerors.

The Highest Name

The Lord humbled Himself to the uttermost, but God exalted Him to the highest peak. (2:9) From the time of the Lord's ascension, there has never been a name on this earth above the name of Jesus. God has exalted Jesus, a real man, to be the Lord of all. Therefore, it is altogether right for us to call, "O Lord Jesus." We need to confess the Lord's name openly. What a glory it is to worship the Lord by calling on His name! By His exaltation, the Lord has been given a name which is above every name. The name is the expression of the sum total of what the Lord Jesus is in His Person and work.

Calling on the name of the Lord Jesus is a way to experience Him and enjoy Him. When we call on the Lord, we spontaneously exercise our spirit and thereby touch the Lord who dwells in our spirit. As the life-giving Spirit in our spirit, the Lord is the fresh spiritual air for our enjoyment and experience. In verse 10 we see three levels of the universe: heaven where angels are, earth where men dwell, and under the earth where the dead reside. The day is coming when those on every level will bow their knees and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. To openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord is to call on the Lord (Rom. 10:9-10, 12-13). The Lord Jesus as a man was made the Lord in His ascension by God (Acts 2:36). Thus, every tongue should confess that He is Lord. This confession results in the glory of God the Father. (1Cor. 15:24-28).

¹ This outline is excerpted from messages 11-13 of the Life Study of Philippians, by Witness Lee. The adapter is solely responsible for any copy or editorial errors.

Working Out Our Salvation

To work out our own salvation is to carry it out, to bring it to the ultimate conclusion. (2:12) 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. Fear is the inward motive; trembling is the outward attitude. 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.

The word *for* at the beginning of verse 13 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. The "willing" that Paul speaks of here is inward, whereas the working is outward. 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..

To receive salvation is one thing, and to work it out is another thing. **To work out salvation is not to accomplish** salvation. Rather, **it is to carry out through continual obedience** the salvation we have received. A very striking aspect of Christ as our pattern is His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. As God, Christ first took the major step of emptying Himself, of laying aside the expression of His deity. Then, having emptied Himself and having taken the form of a man, He humbled Himself. This self-humbling is particularly related to obedience. The Bible underscores the importance of obedience. Within we should have fear as the motive and without we should have trembling as our attitude an indication that we have no confidence in ourselves.

Our salvation is not merely an action; it is a living Person, the Triune God Himself, operating in us. The God Paul speaks of in verse 13 is the Triune God; He is not only the Father, but the Triune God. He is the Son and the Spirit as well as the Father. God operates in us "both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." Where within us does this willing take place? It must be in our will. Therefore, God's operation must spread from our spirit into our will. As God operates the willing within us, He carries out His working. We will in our will, and we work in our body. The Triune God operates in us from our spirit, through our will, and then into our physical body. God's operating is for His good pleasure. His good pleasure is the heart's desire of His will (Eph. 1:5) that we may reach the climax of His supreme salvation..

HOLDING FORTH CHRIST

Paul warns us to: "Do all things without murmurings and reasonings." Murmurings are out of our emotion And reasonings are out of our mind. Both frustrate us from carrying out our salvation to the fullest extent, from experiencing Christ to the uttermost. If we murmur or reason, we do not obey. Obedience to God slays all murmurings and reasonings. In order to work out our salvation, we must obey the very God who operates in us. He Himself is our salvation, and our obedience to Him is the working out of our salvation. Only by obedience can murmurings and reasonings be put to death. Often in important matters we may not murmur or reason. But in small matters we are prone to murmurings and reasonings. Any kind of murmuring or reasoning is disobedience to the inner working of the Triune God. How we need the Lord to save us from our murmurings and reasonings!

We should do all things without murmurings and reasonings in order that we may become blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish. (2:15) Guileless means "simple, artless, innocent; hence, harmless" (Matt. 10:16). The word *blameless* describes our outward behavior, and the word *guileless*, our inward character. To be artless means not to play politics. As children of God, we have God's life and nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Being children of God with the divine life and nature, we are luminaries which reflect the light of the sun (Christ). As such, we are without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation. "**Without blemish**" is the total quality of being blameless and guileless. The Greek word translated *perverted* means "warped or twisted."

As God's children, we need to present the word of life to others. (Phil.2:16) The word of life is very different from doctrine in dead letters. The word of life is the living breathing of God (2Tim. 3:16), the Spirit who gives life (John 6:63). We have the Lord Jesus as our pattern (Phil.2:6-11), we have God operating in us (v. 13), we are God's children possessing God's life and the divine nature (v. 15), we are luminaries qualified to reflect the divine light of Christ (v.15), and we have the word of life to hold forth, to present to others. (v.16) By such we are well able to carry out God's salvation to the full extent. The word of life we are holding forth is actually Christ Himself (John 1:1, 4).