Lesson 4 – Philippians 2:12-18 Shine Like the Stars of God's Universe!
English Standard Version (ESV) Bethel Bible Resources

(12) 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 --- for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure!

(14) Do all things without grumbling or disputing, 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, 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.

(17) Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise, you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Think on these things:

1) What is the true sign of obedience, that of Christians --- and even of our own children (v. 12)?

It is to be obedient (to Christ) even when no one is watching us! (Obey = Do the right thing.)

2) V. 12b is a challenging statement, doctrinally. Recall these verses about being saved: John 3:16 and 11:25; Acts 16:30-31; Romans 10:9 and Ephesians 2:8. How is anyone saved for eternal life?

Salvation is by faith alone: believing in Jesus! (a life-entrusting faith)

3) Now read Ephesians 2:9. What will NEVER get you into heaven? **Good works**

4) So, understanding these critical points of doctrine, what do you think Paul means when he says in v. 12b to, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"? It's okay to be unsure…it even trips up theologians! One key here is to understand that 'salvation' doesn't always refer to eternal life. Salvation is also Biblically used to mean deliverance (saved from danger) and victory.

(Author's input:) It means to me, "Figure it out!" Embrace your journey of salvation. Personalize it! Faith without works is dead. Live and walk daily with God the Spirit, and with reverence and awe. How does my faith apply to children, family, work, church life and politics?

5) See if these verses help you to understand what "might" be an interpretation. Think of it as what we are to be doing for the rest of our lives after being saved by faith. Try to phrase each answer as a "question":

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 ** In my church, figure out: **What's MY gift to contribute to my church fellowship as a member?**

Galatians 5:22-25 ** In my life, figure out: **Is all of God's fruit evident in my life? Where am I lacking?**

Ephesians 2:10 ** In my world, figure out: **What is God's work for me to be doing?**

2 Peter 1:5-8 ** In my faith, figure out: **How can I add to and develop my faith?**

Hebrews 5:11-6:3 ** In my Bible, figure out: **Am I teachable, growing from milk to meat in understanding God's Word?**

6) How are we advised to approach this idea of working out our salvation (v. 12b, our attitude)? Who can help us to "want" to do God's will in our daily lives (v. 13)?

Work out my salvation "with fear and trembling" --- i.e., with a deep reverence towards God. It is God who helps me to want to do His will.

7) Can we be obedient to God and still not act appropriately? See v. 14, and also Matthew 21:28-31 and Luke 15:12, 28-30. What are we told NOT to do?

Yes, we can do the right things with the wrong/poor attitude. We are to obey God without grumbling or complaining.

8) What characteristics in v. 15 point to believers being children of God without blemish? Check out the contrast in 1 Peter 2:19-20.

We are to be blameless and innocent in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation. 1 Peter states that Christians should not suffer discipline because we deserve it (for wrongdoing).

9) V. 15 (and Matthew 5:14-16) says Christians should stand out like what in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation? From v. 16, what counsel is given to show us how to do this?

We are encouraged to "shine as lights (stars) in the world. (From Matthew, we are lights on a hill testifying for God's glory.) V. 16 says we can do this by holding fast to the Word of Life (the teachings of the Bible).

People and situations I want to pray for this week: