

KEEP GROWING; PHIL. 2:12-13 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

THIS A.M., ~ WE RETURN TO PHILIPPIANS. ~~ KEEP READING

AND TODAY WE LOOK AT THE NEXT SECTION ON PHIL., ~ A VERY BRIEF ONE, ~ 2:12-13.

▶▶ Recall in 2:1-11, ~ Paul dealt with believers in relation to one another in our local fellowship.

▶▶ Here in 2:12-13, ~ he deals with believers in relation to our individual walk with the Lord. ~~ Specifically, ~ it's a call to work out our own salvation. ~~ Bulk on verse 12.

"WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION."

NOTICE, ~ IT'S NOT WORK FOR YOUR SALVATION.

▶▶ Paul's addressing believers here.

▶▶ We already have salvation. ~~ And that was a total work of God. ~~ It's impossible to work for salvation.

▷▷ Eph. 2:8-10

▷▷ Titus 3:4-7

IN PHIL. 2:12, ~ WHEN HE SAYS, ~ "WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION," ~ PAUL IS talking about sanctification.

▶▶ I.e., ~ the process by which believers mature spiritually. ~~ TPID, ~ it's the process by which God's people grow more and more Christ-like.

▶▶ And over in Romans Paul tells us that it is God's plan that his people become like his Son.

"WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION," ~ PAUL SAYS.

COULD BE TRANSLATED AS, ~ CONTINUE WORKING OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION.

▶▶ I.e., ~ keep on growing more and more like Jesus. ~~ Or, ~ continue to mature spiritually.

▷▷ Sanctification is an ongoing, ~ lifelong process, ~ occurring between initial salvation & entrance into presence of Christ. ~~ Not all at once ↴ 1/6

▶▶ Now, ~ it's important to understand that in this life, ~ sanctification does not bring sinless perfection. ~ 1 Jn. 1:8, 10 . . . ~ 2:1-2 . . .

▷▷ On this side of heaven, ~ no believer will become sinless.

▷▷ But every genuine believer in Jesus Christ will sin less and less, ~ day after day, ~ week after week, ~ month after month, ~ year after year, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ as we become more and more Christ-like.

AS WE NOTED, ~ SANCTIFICATION IS AN ONGOING, ~ LIFELONG PROCESS.

▶▶ And make no mistake, ~ it will be a life-long, ~ hard-fought battle.

▷▷ Because the world, ~ the flesh, ~ and the devil continually try to derail the process.

(2:12) CONTINUE TO MATURE SPIRITUALLY. ~ I.E., ~ KEEP ON GROWING MORE and more like Jesus, ~ Paul says.

A COMMAND. ~ THIS IS NOT SOMETHING THAT IS OPTIONAL IN THE Christian life.

▶▶ Spiritual growth is expected and required of us. ~ God is not content, ~ nor does He want us to be content, ~ with us being spiritually immature.

IN EPH. 4 (HOMEWORK), ~ PAUL SAYS THAT JESUS GAVE FIVE GROUPS OF spiritually gifted leaders to the church.

▶▶ "the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers."

▶▶ Paul goes on to say that Jesus did this in order to help believers achieve 3 goals: ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to help us become grounded and united in sound doctrine; ~ to help us become spiritually mature in our behavior; ~ and to help us grow more and more like Jesus.

▶▶ Then in Eph. 4:14a, ~ Paul points out the result of helping believers reach these 3 goals.

▷▷ "so that we ~ [i.e., ~ as a result of helping believers reach these three goals, ~ believers] ~ may no longer be children."

▷▷ "children" pictures believers who lack understanding, ~ who are highly impressionable, ~ gullible, ~ foolish, ~ and who are childish in biblical doctrine and behavior.

↪↪ When we reach the three goals, ~ we will no longer be this way. ¶¶ 2/6

▷▷ An implication in all of this is that Jesus does not want us to be children, ~ spiritually speaking.

↳↳ He does not want us to lack understanding, ~ or to be highly impressionable, ~ gullible, ~ foolish, ~ and childish in biblical doctrine and behavior.

↳↳ Rather, ~ Jesus wants us to constantly be moving forward in spiritual growth.

IN HEB. 5:11-6:1a (LEB), ~ REBUKED HIS ORIGINAL READERS FOR their spiritual stagnation.

▶▶ "Concerning this we have much to say and it is difficult to explain, ~ since you have become sluggish in hearing ~ [sense seems to be that they became spiritually lazy and stopped trying to understand]. ~ ~ ¶¶

▷▷ For indeed, ~ although you ought to be teachers by this time ~ [i.e., ~ they had been believers so long that they should have been teaching others], ~ ¶¶

▷▷ you have need of someone to teach you again the beginning elements of the oracles of God ~ ¶¶

▷▷ [i.e., ~ instead of being able to teach, ~ they needed someone to teach them the basic things about God's word again], ~ ¶¶

▷▷ and you have need of milk, ~ not solid food [i.e., ~ You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food]. ~ ~ ¶¶

▷▷ For everyone who partakes of milk is unacquainted with the message of righteousness, ~ because he is an infant. ~ ~ ¶¶

▷▷ But solid food is for the mature, ~ who because of practice ~ have trained their faculties for the distinguishing of both good and evil. ~ ~ ¶¶

▷▷ Therefore, ~ leaving behind the elementary message about Christ, ~ let us move on to maturity." ~ ~ ¶¶

▷▷ [i.e., ~ therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and move on to maturity]

SO, ~ CRYSTAL CLEAR . . . ~ WE ARE TO CONSTANTLY BE MOVING FORWARD IN OUR spiritual growth.

BACK TO PHIL. 2:12. ~ ~ PAUL SAYS, ~ "CONTINUE TO MATURE SPIRITUALLY "WITH fear and trembling." ¶¶ 3/6

PLEASE DO NOT TAKE THIS AS IMPLYING THAT WE NEED TO BE TERRIFIED OF GOD.

▶▶ "fear and trembling" have little to do with terror and panic.

▷▷ It could be translated, ~ "continue working out your salvation with awe and reverence."

PAUL MAY BE IMPLYING TWO THINGS HERE WITH THIS PHRASE.

▶▶ 1st, ~ may want us to have an overwhelming feeling of wonder that God would even save us.

▷▷ That God would send his Son to save all those who would believe in him is truly amazing when we stop to consider the way we were prior to salvation.

▷▷ Prior to salvation, ~ we were "following the prince of the power of the air."

▷▷ We were "children of wrath." ~ I.e., ~ we were subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and destined for ~ God's wrath.

▷▷ And Rom. 5:6-11

▷▷ Paul may have wanted us to have this overwhelming feeling of wonder at what God has done in spite of our depravity so that out of just sheer gratitude for it, ~ we would pursue spiritual growth.

▶▶ 2nd, ~ with the phrase "awe and reverence" Paul may be impressing upon us the seriousness of this matter of spiritual growth.

▷▷ Looks like Paul wants us to take this matter of spiritual growth absolutely seriously.

▷▷ This doesn't mean we can't be joyful as we grow spiritually. ~~ Actually, ~ joy is probably a by-product of spiritual growth.

▷▷ What it does mean is this, ~ suggest. ~~ We should not act flippantly toward this matter of spiritual growth. ~~ Should not have a "ho hum-ok whatever" attitude about it.

▷▷ This exhortation to continue to grow spiritually comes from the Lord himself.

↪↪ And because it comes from him, ~ we can rest assured that spiritual growth is for our spiritual well-being.

▷▷ So it seems pretty clear that we are to take this very seriously, ~ and continually be taking meaningful and substantive steps toward becoming more and more like Jesus.

▷▷ And consider this, ~ my ~ Jesus died a horrible death for us.

↳↳ Would it not then be disrespectful to him to not take this matter of spiritual growth absolutely seriously, ~ ↴↴

→→ and to not continually take meaningful and substantive steps forward in spiritual growth? ~ ~ Also, ~ would it not be very ungrateful?

CONTINUE TO MATURE SPIRITUALLY. ~ I.E., ~ KEEP ON GROWING MORE AND more like Jesus, ~ Paul exhorts us.

AND IN VERSE 13, ~ PAUL GIVES US SOME EXCELLENT NEWS.

▶▶ God gives us the desire and the ability to carry out the exhortation to continue moving forward in spiritual growth.

▶▶ Now, ~ this is great encouragement, ~ because we cannot carry out this exhortation in our own strength or under our own power.

▷▷ In fact, ~ in the broadest sense, ~ we cannot live the Christian life or carry out God's will in our own strength or under our own power. ~ ~ Apart from Jesus, ~ we can do nothing.

▶▶ And consider that in our natural state, ~ i.e., ~ in our sinful nature, ~ our inclination is to not desire or follow what the Lord wants.

▷▷ We are inclined to do our own thing, ~ to carry out the desires of our fallen nature, ~ to follow the world and the devil.

▶▶ But praise God, ~ the Lord produces in believers both the desire and the enablement we need to live for him, ~ including the desire and ability to continue to grow spiritually.

BUT THERE'S MORE.

▶▶ In Ezek. 36:26, ~ we see that God gives believers a "a new heart" and "a new spirit."

▷▷ I.e., ~ a totally new nature, ~ which by instinct wants to please, ~ to live for, ~ and to serve ~ God. ~ ~ The total opposite of our old nature.

▶▶ In Ezek. 36:27, ~ God says, ~ "And I will put my Spirit within you, ~ and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

▷▷ Through the immeasurably great power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, ~ we are enabled to follow and obey God's word. ↴↴ 5/6

▶▶ And in 2 Cor. 5:17, ~ Paul writes, ~ "Therefore, ~ if anyone is in Christ, ~ he is a new creation. ~~ The old has passed away; ~~ behold, ~ the new has come.

▷▷ It's not a remodeling or repairing of the old nature. ~~ When we are born again, ~ we become a totally new person in Christ.

▶▶ The Lord has given us very powerful resources to enable us to live the Christian life, ~ to fully carry out his will, ~ to grow spiritually, ~ 77

▷▷ and to be victorious over the resistance we experience from our sin nature, ~ the world, ~ & the devil.

CONCLUSION.

HOW GRACIOUS OUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS

▶▶ Something like this

▶▶ What an awesome God we serve.

LET'S PRAY 6/6