

# **PHILIPPIANS: REPLACING SELFISH AMBITION WITH GODLY ACHIEVEMENT**

## **Part VI: Confidently But Reverently Heeding God's Inner Working**

**(Philippians 2:12-18)**

### **I. Introduction**

- A. As we have often noted in this lesson series, the Philippian believers lived in a culture marked by selfish ambition and strife, what tempted them to relate to one another in this sinful mindset, cf. Philippians 4:2.
- B. To lead his readers to have victory over this sin, Paul in Philippians 2:12-18 told of God's inner work to make his readers will and do God's good pleasure opposite selfish ambition. We view that passage for our insight:

### **II. Confidently But Reverently Heeding God's Inner Working, Philippians 2:12-18.**

- A. Having written of Christ's perfect example of self-sacrificing humble service for God in Philippians 2:5-11, Paul urged his readers to continue to obey his directives in life as they had always done, Philippians 2:12a.
- B. Specifically, they were to "work out" their "own salvation" (Phil. 2:12b KJV), and we explain (as follows):
  - 1. Paul did **not** mean they were to work **for** their salvation, for in Ephesians 2:8-9 he claimed that salvation is by grace through faith as **opposed** to human **works**, (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 655)
  - 2. The Greek verb rendered "work out" is *katēgazomai*, and it often means "achieve, accomplish, produce, create," but in this context where the direct object is "salvation," it bears the sense of "work **out**" one's salvation, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 442-443.
  - 3. Thus, Paul was directing his believing readers "to put into practice in their daily living what God had worked in them by His Spirit" when they were saved by trusting in Christ, *Ibid.*, Bible Know. Com., N. T.
  - 4. Applied to the Apostle Paul's burden in the context, he was seeking to direct his readers to live **out** the transformation God had wrought in them at salvation, to live **out** the self-sacrificing humble service that mimicked Christ's great example through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, cf. Romans 8:3-4.
- C. This "working **out**" in one's life was to be performed with "fear and trembling," for it was God the Holy Spirit who indwelt these believers (Romans 8:9b) Who was at work causing them both to will and to perform God's good pleasure in functioning in self-sacrificing, humble service to the Lord, Philippians 2:12b-13. This claim reveals that when the believer relies on the indwelling Holy Spirit, what he first wills to do and then performs in action in conformity to that will is to be entirely led of God. That is to elicit a sense of great awe in the believer as he realizes the ministry of the Lord in and through him to the glory of God Himself!
- D. Armed with this realization, Paul taught his readers to perform specific self-sacrificing, humble tasks, v. 14:
  - 1. First, they were to do all things in their lives and service without "complaining," *goggusmos*, without "a bad attitude expressed in grumbling," *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 163; *Ibid.*, B. K. C., N. T.; Phil. 2:14a.
  - 2. Second, they were to do all things in their lives and service without "arguing," *dialogismos*, without "disputing" that "may refer, at least in part, to the practice of going to civil courts to settle their differences (cf. 1 Cor. 6:1-11)," *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 185; *Ibid.*, Bible Know. Com., N. T.; Phil. 2:14b.
- E. This activity would cause Paul's readers to be "blameless" (*amemptos*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 44 ) and "innocent, pure" (*akeraios*, *Ibid.*, p. 29), the sons of God amid a crooked and depraved generation given to selfish ambition and its resulting vices, and thus among whom the Philippian believers would shine as lights of God's righteousness in a world of spiritual darkness and sin, Philippians 2:15.
- F. In thus functioning as blameless and innocent, pure of selfish ambition in a self-centered, wicked world, Paul's readers would "hold forth" the word of life, the life-giving Gospel of Jesus Christ with an effective testimony that the lost world around them in Philippi might behold it and see its need to trust in Christ, Philippians 2:16a.
- G. This testimony would cause Paul to rejoice at Christ's return when he saw that his discipling efforts with the Philippians had not been in vain, Philippians 2:16b.
- H. Paul added that even if he were offered in spiritual sacrifice in being martyred for his work with his readers, he would still rejoice, and he willed that his readers might rejoice in their service for God, Philippians 2:17-18.

***Lesson:*** Paul noted that the Holy Spirit worked in his Philippian readers to make them will to do and then to perform God's perfect will of functioning with selfless, humble service to the Lord marked by no grumbling or disputing toward one another, a bright testimony before their lost world to the glory of God and Paul's great joy. Paul thus urged his readers to revere the great work of God in them and so live out the Lord's will in their lives.

***Application:*** May we rely on the Holy Spirit's prompting and power both to will and to do God's great pleasure that we might shine as a brilliant testimony before a lost world to the glory of God and His eternal great reward.