

Small Group Study Guide

Be Humbled by What He's Doing

Philippians 2:12-18

March 7, 2010

Leader's Notes

PLEASE NOTE: These "Leader's Notes" are a resource to the Small Group Leader to help you in preparing for this study. They are meant to be supplemental. You do not need to cover all the information in these notes with your group. They are simply provided as a resource to you.

Welcome and Introduction:

- Encourage group members to bring their study guide with them that they use on Sunday to take notes on the sermon, but also have extra copies available in case they forget.
- Open with prayer.

A Closer Look:

The following notes are to help you better understand the passages you will be looking at in this study.

Notes from ESV Study Bible on Philippians 2:12-18 :

Phil. 2:12–18 Living as Lights in the World. With the breathtaking portrayal of Christ before them (vv. 5–11), Paul exhorts the Philippians to demonstrate the same faith and obedience in their everyday lives.

Phil. 2:12–13 The Philippians have **obeyed** (cf. Christ's obedience, v. 8) in the past and should continue to do so as they **work out** their **salvation with fear and trembling**. They cannot be content with past glories but need to demonstrate their faith day by day as they nurture their relationship with God. But while God's justice is a cause for sober living ("fear and trembling"), it is not as though Paul wants the Philippians to be anxious that they can never be good enough to merit God's favor. Rather, it is God's love and enabling grace that will see them through: **it is God who works in you**. They can rejoice in God's empowering presence even as they work hard at living responsible Christian

lives. While v. 12 may seem to suggest salvation by works, it is clear that Paul rejects any such teaching (cf. 3:2–11). In 2:12 Paul means “salvation” in terms of progressively coming to experience all of the aspects and blessings of salvation. The Philippians' continued obedience is an inherent part of “working out” their salvation in this sense. But as v. 13 demonstrates, these works are *the result* of God's work within his people. **both to will and to work for his good pleasure**. Even the desire (“to will”) to do what is good comes from God; but he also works in the believer to generate actual choices of the good, so that the desires result in actions. (On fear of God, see notes on Acts 5:5; 9:31.)

Phil. 2:14–15 Paul continues the theme of “working out” one's salvation (vv. 12–13). The Philippians should **shine as lights** amid a **crooked and twisted generation**. Paul's choice of words recalls the wilderness generation of Israel, who in Deut. 32:5 are described by these very words (“crooked and twisted generation”) and whose spiritual progress was thwarted by **grumbling** and **questioning** (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1–12). Shining “as lights” probably alludes to Dan. 12:2–3. Those who express their faith by living in this way will be raised to eternal life (see Dan. 12:2), to Paul's great joy.

Phil. 2:16 The Philippians' obedience to the **word of life** is not merely a matter of private concern. As an apostle and fellow sharer in the gospel, Paul's own **labor** would be **in vain** if they failed to hold fast until **the day of Christ** (cf. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:2–11; 2 Pet. 3:10–13; Rev. 20:11–21:8) and thus proved not to be genuine believers. **Holding fast** means both believing God's Word and following it. Since the Greek *epechō* can mean either “hold fast” or “hold out to, offer,” some think that Paul may have in mind “holding forth,” i.e., proclaiming, the word of life.

Phil. 2:17 Paul compares himself to a **drink offering** (cf. 2 Tim. 4:6). This type of offering, familiar in both the OT and Greco-Roman culture, involved pouring out wine, either onto the ground or, as here, on an altar along with an animal or grain sacrifice (see Num. 28:7). It was a vivid illustration of a life “poured out” for God's service. The Philippians, too, are a **sacrificial offering**; they are to emulate Paul's joyful service to God.