**BCM Bible Study: February 13/14, 2019**

**Philippians 2:12-30: Working Out Salvation**

Working Out Salvation: **Read Philippians 2:12-13**

* These verses contain a significant tension between God’s work and our work in terms of our own salvation – what does Paul say about each?
  + The relationship between God’s activity and our responsibility is one of the great mysteries of our faith. One on hand, God is the author of our salvation – it is by grace alone that we are called out of death into life in Him. On the other hand, we are called to respond, confess, repent, believe, cast sin aside and imitate Christ. In this passage, we find a strong emphasis on both.
  + NOTE: In the first Bible study we talked about “salvation” as follows: “Salvation is not just a momentary event of being declared “saved” – that is simply the beginning. Rather, salvation is the lifelong process of becoming more like Christ.” In this instance, we are talking about the latter.
* So, both you and God play some role in the process of becoming more like Christ. What does it practically look like for you to play your part in this process? A helpful way to think about this is the concept of **openness and availability**. We have the opportunity to do things each day to intentionally open ourselves to what God wants to do in and through us. Rather than being so busy that we have no time for God, we must make ourselves available to what he wants to do.
  + What can you start doing to open yourself to what God wants to do in and through you?
  + What are the hurdles to being open and available to the work of the Spirit? What can you do to overcome these hurdles?
* Paul says that we work out our salvation *with fear and trembling*. This does not mean that we are afraid of God, but that we have an appropriate reverence and respect for Him.
  + Why is maintaining this perspective essential for spiritual growth?
  + What about God’s character evokes “fear and trembling” for you?

Lights in the World: **Read Philippians 2:14-18**

NOTE: There are a few things in this section that I will not be addressing specifically because they have already been discussed in previous studies. Here are some notes on those subjects in case they come up:

1. The call to holiness is not a call to earn salvation. Instead: “The most basic NT incentive to holy living is an emphasis on what we already are.” (Moises Silva) We are called to be holy because we have been called righteous through Christ.
2. Paul places heavy emphasis on his hope and excitement in the progress of others. His life is not his own – he is fully devoted to the mission of God, which is that people be brought into a relationship with Him. The intense language in v.17 echoes his sentiment in 1:8-11. To love others in this way is to imitate Christ.

Here are the questions for this week:

* There are many ways to be “blameless and innocent,” but what does Paul mention specifically in this passage?
  + Hint: No grumbling or disputing – the focus is on unity again!
* This passage parallels Jesus’ teaching during the Sermon on the Mount: **Read Matthew 5:14-16.**
  + It is important to note that in both Matthew and Philippians, the “your” in - “let *your* light shine” - is plural. The idea is that we together shine our own lights, creating together a greater light that shines in the darkness. Also, as we love each, that in and of itself is a part of the light that we shine. The image of the light in the darkness suggests that “where there is light people can find their way and everything is clear; where there is darkness they stumble and are lost.” (R.T. France)
  + What do Christians have to offer the world in terms of guidance in the darkness?
  + Where and in what aspects of culture is light needed in our world?
* Commenting on the Sermon on the Mount, R.T. France says this: “Here the context indicates that it is about the effect which the life of the disciples must have on those around them. It thus takes for granted that the ‘job description’ of a disciple is not fulfilled by private personal holiness, but includes the witness of public exposure.”
  + Christians need to have a public presence – how can we do this better as a community?
  + In what ways can we shine our collective light in a dark world?

Timothy and Epaphroditus: **Read Philippians 2:19-30**

* Here, Paul sets forward two examples of Christlike service in Timothy and Epaphroditus.
  + How does Timothy’s attitude resemble that of Christ?
    - What are some of your own interests that consume a lot of your time and energy?
    - How could you adjust in order that these interests do not compete with those of Jesus?
      * NOTE: In some cases, we must cut back on our interests – some are completely self-serving. In other cases, we need to use our interests as a platform for the gospel. If the gospel is our utmost interest, everything else will fall into place. Really, that is the heart of this question – what is your utmost interest?
  + Epaphroditus was sent by the Philippians to Paul to bring him gifts and support (this is what meant by “what was lacking in your service to me”). How does Epaphroditus’ attitude resemble that of Christ?
    - Have you ever been afraid of where following Jesus may lead you? Talk about that experience.
    - How would your decision-making look different if you were to make decisions out of faith rather than fear?