Part 10: Work Out Your Salvation

Philippians 2:12-18

Following the model of Jesus, we are called to the obedience of faith by embodying our salvation in the covenant community of Jesus.

Today, we have the joy of baptizing three young people, who desire to profess their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior & Lord. In this sermon, I will build a bridge from Paul's exhortation to us and the sacrament of baptism. While this isn't a classic baptism scripture, I think it can work.

I. Baptized Into the Covenantal Community of Jesus

Paul wrote his letters to local churches. Of the 13 letters of Paul in our NT, 12 of them were written to local churches. Only one was written to an individual (Philemon).

The people in those churches were baptized so his letters are instructions on the meaning of baptism and how we are called to live in light of our baptism. To be baptized in Christ is to be baptized into a covenant community of Jesus' disciples.

"For Paul people are saved individually, but they are saved to become a 'people for God's Name.' " – Gordon Fee

II. Work Out Your Salvation

"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."

Q – What does Paul mean? If our salvation is a gift, why do we have to work it out?

Paul is continuing his theme from 1:27 – "Whatever happens conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

The immediate context of this command is the external pressure from the culture to give their allegiance to Rome and relational stress they're experiencing in the church in Philippi.

This is how saved people live out their salvation in the context of the believing community. It's primarily a communal ethic. We live out our salvation – our life in Christ – personally and in the covenant community as a "people for God's Name."

Following the model of Jesus, we are called to the obedience of faith by embodying our salvation in the covenant community of Jesus.

Paul uses "justification" and "salvation" differently.

Justification is God's declaration that we are innocent before Him because we have received the righteousness of Christ by grace through faith (Romans 4:5; 11:6; 1 Corinthians 6:11). This declaration was made over us at our regeneration, and it remains true of us forever.

"Salvation" in Paul refers to the totality of our life in Christ including our present experience and the future Day when God returns to vindicate publicly all those who have trusted Him (past, present & future).

"Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!" Romans 5:9

"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose." Philippians 2:12-13

Salvation is not only something we receive, but it is something we do. God, through His grace and Spirit, supplies us the desire and power to obey.

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." 1 Corinthians 15:10

III. With Fear and Trembling

"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose." Philippians 2:12-13

Notice that Paul connects this exhortation to the model of Jesus humble obedience even to death (2:12). When we see what Jesus has done for us and how he has revealed the glory of the Father, the right response is reverence, awe, and wonder. This is my God! This is my Savior!

IV. Becoming Who You Are in Christ

"Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, 'children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.' Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life." Philippians 2:14-15

The life of our sanctification, our formation in Christ, is a life of becoming increasingly who God says we are in Christ. As adopted children of the Father, we are given His Name. We are to grow into bearing the family Name with honor.

Following the model of Jesus, we are called to the obedience of faith by embodying our salvation in the covenant community of Jesus.

For those being baptized today, it is a public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. It is also their declaration that they will give themselves to growing into their salvation in the community of Jesus' disciples. Their salvation is both personal and communal.