**Lesson 7: Cooperate With God’s Work in Your Life**

Text: Philippians 2:12-18

**Introduction**

Have you ever felt like it was impossible to live the Christian life? Maybe you have watched other believers and felt you could never attain to their spiritual walk. Perhaps you have seriously considered the way Jesus lived and came to a quick conclusion that you could never live like Him! Yet, that was Paul’s exhortation to the Philippian believers. In the previous lesson we learned that strife was present in the Philippian church. It was their natural tendency to be self-centered and self-serving. Instead, they were to follow the example of Jesus Christ who humbly served others. How could they ever be like Jesus? In this lesson, we will see that God was at work in them! He not only gives believers the example to follow, but the power to do so! Let’s consider the power at work in us to follow Jesus’ example. Joy is produced as we cooperate with God’s work in our lives.

1. Paul exhorted the Philippians to cooperate with God’s work in their lives. (v. 12-14)
   1. Their obedience was to be based on God’s prompting, not Paul’s presence. If you only obey when there is an outward pressure to obey, it is not from the heart. (v. 12a)
   2. They were responsible to “work out” what God worked in them. (v. 12b)
      1. Working *for* salvation is *not* the focus here. Since they are called “saints” and have “fellowship” in the gospel, it is evident that they were already saved.
      2. The word translated “work out” has rich word pictures. It was used for miners who mined out valuable ore from a certain location. It was used in reference to farmers who worked a field and gathered the harvest.
      3. “The Christian life is not a series of ups and downs. It is rather a process of ‘ins’ and ‘outs.’ God works in, and we work out.” (Wiersbe)
      4. It basically means to live out the fact of their salvation.
      5. They were to take God’s work in their lives seriously with “fear” (awe) and “trembling” (reverence).
   3. God’s work is focused on the desire and the ability to follow Jesus’ example. (v. 13)
   4. Since God is at work in their lives, they should avoid grumbling and arguing. (v. 14)
   5. Transition: The next few verses explain why they should cooperate with God’s work.
2. The first reason they should cooperate with God’s work in their lives is so that they might be a godly testimony to the lost. (v. 15-16a)
   1. Cooperation with God’s work in you will produce a godly testimony. (v. 15a)
      1. They were to be “blameless” in that they were to live above reproach.
      2. “Harmless” means that they were living without a mixture of evil.
      3. They were to be a positive reflection on their Heavenly Father.
      4. If they had a godly testimony, there would be no cause for “rebuke.”
   2. Maintaining a godly testimony does not require isolation from the sinful world. (v. 15b)
      1. “It is not by leaving the world but by ministering to it that we see God’s purpose fulfilled in our lives.” (Wiersbe)
      2. Those with a godly testimony *need* to be in direct contact with those who do not know Christ.
         1. Those who are “crooked” need contact with those with integrity.
         2. Those who are “perverse” need contact with those who are pure.
   3. When the godly have contact with the ungodly, light shines in the darkness. (v. 15c)
   4. Those who cooperate with God’s work in their lives have something to offer. (v. 16a)
      1. They hold forth the word of life.
      2. “Hold forth” means that they adhere to God’s Word and present it as God’s solution for man’s problem.
      3. It is called the “word of life” because it produces life in those who believe.
3. Another reason they should cooperate with God’s work in their lives is the joy it brings to the saved. (v. 16b-18)
   1. Cooperating with God’s work in your life has positive results in both the present as well as the future.
   2. It results in future joy at the “day of Christ.” (v. 16b)
   3. It results in present joy in those who have labored for their spiritual growth. (v. 16c-18)
      1. They rejoice that their efforts have not been in vain. (v. 16c)
      2. Your spiritual growth gives them reason for continued spiritual sacrifice and service. (v. 17-18)
4. Central Idea: The Philippians should cooperate with God’s work in their lives so that they might be a godly testimony to the lost and a source of joy to the saved.
5. Application: You should cooperate with God’s work in your life that you might be a godly testimony to the lost and a source of joy to the saved.
   1. You need God’s work in your life. You cannot obey without His help!
   2. How does God work in you? List ways in which God works in you to will and to do of His good pleasure.
   3. Evaluate your testimony before the lost. Do others have access to Jesus because they know you? Does your life bring light to the darkness?
   4. Is your life a source of joy to your brothers and sisters in Christ? If not, what needs to change? What needs to change first?

**Conclusion**

“If the workman is what he ought to be, the work will be what it ought to be.” (Wiersbe). If we allow God to make us who we ought to be, then His work at Hillcrest Baptist Church will be what it ought to be. If you cooperate with God’s work in your life, you will be who you ought to be. Experience the joy that comes from cooperating with God’s work in your life.