

Yateley Baptist Church, Sunday 24 May 2020

Opening Prayer

Hymn: Praise! 901

O Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end;
be now and ever near me,
my master and my friend:
I shall not fear the battle
if you are by my side,
nor wander from the pathway
if you will be my guide.

2 O let me feel you near me,
the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
the tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me,
around me and within;
but Jesus, draw still nearer
and shield my soul from sin!

3 O let me hear you speaking
in accents clear and still;
above the storms of passion,
the murmurs of self-will:
O speak to reassure me,
to hasten or control;
and speak to make me listen,
O Guardian of my soul.

4 O Jesus, you have promised
to all who follow you,
that where you are in glory
your servant shall be too;
and, Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end;
O give me grace to follow
my master and my friend.

5 O let me see your footmarks
and in them place my own;
my hope to follow truly
is in your strength alone:
O guide me, call me, draw me,
uphold me to the end;
and then in heaven receive me,
my Saviour and my friend.

John E Bode (1816-1874)

Reading: Philippians 2:1-18, ESV

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labour in vain. ¹⁷Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Hymn: Praise! 869

All the way my saviour leads me:

what have I to ask beside?

Can I doubt his tender mercy

who through life has been my guide?

O what heavenly peace and comfort

here by faith in him to dwell!

For whatever may befall me,

Jesus will do all things well.

For whatever may befall me,

Jesus will do all things well.

2 All the way my Saviour leads me:

cheers each winding path I tread,

gives me grace for every trial,

feeds me with the living bread.

Though my weary feet may stumble

and my soul may thirsty be,

pouring from the rock before me,

there a spring of joy I see.

Pouring from the rock before me,

there a spring of joy I see.

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3 All the way my Saviour leads me:
O the fullness of his love!
Perfect rest to me is promised
in my Father's house above.
When my spirit, clothed, immortal,
flies to heaven's eternal day,
this my song through endless ages,
'Jesus led me all the way!'
This my song through endless ages,
'Jesus led me all the way!'

Frances J van Alstyne (1820-1915)

Prayer

Hymn: Praise! 898

Awake, my soul, and rise
amazed, as there you see
upon a cross the Saviour God
become a curse for me.

2 How gloriously fulfilled
is God's most ancient plan,
conceived in his eternal mind
before the world began.

3 Here depths of wisdom shine,
which angels cannot trace;
the highest rank of heaven's host
still wonder at such grace.

4 Here free salvation reigns,
and triumphs through the cross,
and ever stands to rescue us
from everlasting loss.

5 Now hell, in all its strength,
its rage and boasted charms,
can never snatch a wandering sheep
from Jesus' mighty arms.

William Williams (1717-1791)

Sermon: Philippians 2:12-18 – Work Out Your Own Salvation

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to do.” (v12-13)

Changing the advice from “stay home” to “stay alert” caused a lot of confusion.

People’s response to the new message has highlighted the importance of being clear and concise.

Paul has a very clear message and he wants to make sure that they understand it so that they can live it out, “in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation”.

Verses 3-4: “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

We should have a renewed mind which is ours by virtue of our being united to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul takes us on a journey with the Lord Jesus Christ, as he shows us that the motivation and power that we have comes from our salvation in Christ.

Consider the downward trajectory that Christ took for us: his humility in heaven, his humility in becoming a human, just like us, and ultimately his humiliation as he was hung to die on a cross. Jesus really did all these things.

Christ didn’t stay dead. He rose on the third day and was given the name Lord – a name which is above all things. On the day of his return, every knee will bow to him and every tongue will confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

The more we learn about God (theology), the more we’ll want to worship him (doxology).

Paul wants us to remember that he has called us to live humbly, counting others more important than ourselves (3-4). He also wants us to have in mind the one who lived this out in his humiliation and the divine approval of his exaltation (5-11).

“Work out [y]our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (12-13).

1. The Command

He knew his audience well and had heard good reports: verse 12: “Therefore my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence but much more in my absence”.

After their initial, enthusiastic acceptance of the gospel (4:15) and their continued faithful partnership with him in the proclamation of the gospel in the time since (1:5), his overriding concern is that his readers live in a manner which is worthy of the gospel of Christ (1:27).

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

The application of what Paul says in these verses then, is first corporate (how the church is to conduct itself) and then individual.

Eugene Peterson helpfully refers to the Christian life as being “A long obedience in the same direction”. The difficulty with such obedience is that the world and the devil do their best to disrupt it at every turn.

Walter Hansen says: “Religious tourists hunting for sensational entertainment, instantaneous enlightenment, and emotional excitement will jump on the newest rides and take quick shortcuts, but they will not be found with the pilgrims on the long, hard road following in the footsteps of Christ, who was obedient to death – even death on a cross.”

The reason that the difficulties in the church then – and in churches in any age – need to be sorted with fear and trembling is because, as a result of Christ’s exaltation, all believers will have to not only confess him as Lord, but also to answer for and give account of, our conduct.

We are not left to our own devices, “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (13).

Don Carson explains it like this: “God himself is working in us both to will and to act: he works in us at the level of our wills and at the level of our doing.”

God does have a purpose – it is “both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” God’s great pleasure is, by virtue of his love for us, our ultimate good (Romans 8:28).

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

We might feel tempted in our times of frustration and anxiety to wonder whether it is all worth it to carry on, or if it is even possible for us to, given what we can’t do presently. Paul’s answer couldn’t be clearer, could it? Whatever the next week or month or year holds, we are to continue to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, KNOWING that it is God who works in us both to will and to work for his good pleasure – which is also our ultimate good.

2. The How To...

“Do all things without grumbling or disputing” (14).

Markus Bockmuehl says, “These things, then, are not minor blemishes of morality, peripheral human weakness in an otherwise flawless Christian spectacle. Instead, they are part of what marks the watershed of the Christian life.”

Those who continue in such murmuring are not obedient to Christ and his gospel and are therefore rejecting the divine call to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

verses 14-16: “Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life.”

Paul’s command continues: “among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life”. Here, Paul is referencing the Old Testament – specifically Daniel 12:3, which describes the resurrection age when, “those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

When we, as God’s people live in humble harmony as we should, considering others as being more important than we do ourselves, we shine resurrection light into a dark world, especially as we are holding fast to the word of life – the gospel of Christ.

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

“So that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run the race in vain or labour in vain.”

Verse 17: Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.”

Paul closes this section with an invitation to join with him in rejoicing: “Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.”

The grounds of the joy that he commands them to have is the same ground for his joy and for ours – it is the self-humiliation and present glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the assurance of our future victory and is the motivating example “to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Hymn: Praise! 894

Come, O fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing your grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise:
songs of God's abundant treasure,
sung by angel tongues above,
songs that tell the boundless measure
of my Lord's unchanging love!

2 I remember God's great mercy:
by his help I've safely come;
and I know he will not fail me,
but will surely bring me home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger
wandering far away from God,
and, to rescue me from danger,
shed for me his precious blood.

Robert Robinson (1735-1790)

3 Through God's grace I am his debtor-
daily I this thought renew!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter
bind my wandering heart to you.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love!
Take my heart, O take and seal it,
seal it from your courts above!

Closing Prayer