

REDEEMING THE DISRUPTION

Have you ever wondered (or doubted) what God’s present role is in your life? How about in our church? Yes, we know about the role of Jesus 2,000 years ago, but *what about today?* What part is God playing *right now*, in *this* moment? It’s possible for us to feel like, while God did something amazing long ago through Jesus, now that Jesus isn’t around anymore it’s kind of up to us to finish what He started. Perhaps you can relate to feeling like it’s up to us to make the Christian life work out. What a burden! What a frustration! One of the great reminders in this week’s passage is this: *while we are at work, God is at work in us too, even now!*

Main Text: Philippians 2:12-30

CONNECT

1. How has this past week gone for you? Are there any new struggles or needs that you’re experiencing?
2. What did you take away from last Sunday’s sermon? Was something especially significant, inspiring, confusing, or helpful?

LEARN & OBSERVE

1. Read verses 12-13. How would you describe the relationship between human effort or activity and God’s activity as stated in these verses? Note how this comes right on the heels of the description of God’s power in verses 9-11.
2. Read verses 14-18. The language here reminds us of Israel’s time in the wilderness.¹ How do words like, *grumbling* and *questioning* (or, arguing) relate to the topic of *humility* that was emphasized last week?
3. Paul’s instruction isn’t only negative—stop grumbling—but it also calls for “holding fast to the word of life” (i.e., the gospel message). Why were both aspects essential for the Philippians to “shine as lights in the world”?
4. Read verses 19-30. What attributes of Timothy and Epaphroditus made them both suitable helpers for Paul, and how do these same attributes relate to the kind of things Paul is urging the Philippians to exhibit themselves?

¹ There are at least two comparisons: (1) Israel’s sin of grumbling and complaining is cited throughout the story of the exodus and wilderness wanderings in places like Exodus 16 and Numbers 11. They complained against Moses and God, while the Philippians seem to be more prone to grumbling against each other. (2) Next, Moses refers to the people of Israel as “a crooked and twisted generation” in Deuteronomy 32. Paul equates the Philippian church with the new people of God whose role is to stand out from and witness to the surrounding world, including the people of Israel who reject Jesus and the gospel message.

APPLY

1. The whole notion of our work alongside God's work in us implies a life of faith that is meant to be active and progressing rather than stagnant—even during this time with COVID-19 keeping us at a distance. How would you describe the state of your faith?
2. As we “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling,” the God whose power raised Jesus from the grave and exalted Him (vv. 9-11) is also at work in us. What difference should this make in how we think about our own efforts following Christ?
3. What kind of “work” has Paul called the Philippians to engage in up to this point in his letter? What can we learn, then, and apply to our understanding of what it means to work out our own salvation?
4. Breaking News: Calvary Bible Church is an imperfect group of people who may inspire critique or even criticism from others (including you)! How do we guard against grumbling or questioning/arguing with each other?
5. Our witness is made credible by our unity (i.e., lack of grumbling), but it also depends on us not losing sight of or compromising the gospel message. What ways might we be tempted to let go of or modify the gospel message today?
6. Timothy and Epaphroditus were critical to Paul's life and ministry. Another way of putting it is that Paul didn't attempt to minister alone. Who are the key companions and fellow-workers alongside of you as you follow Christ?