

**Intro** Why should you change? One of the problems with New Year's resolutions to change or do something different is your motivation. Our hearts do not change easily. We do not let go of something we love without great effort. We need significant reasons to stop current habits and replace them with unfamiliar ways of thinking and behaving. Few if any of us stop wrong ways of thinking or behaving simply because we come to see that it is wrong. Genuine change that the gospel promotes and requires involves significant demolition and remodeling of our thinking at the motivational level. What excites you? What causes you great joy? What turns you on, pushes your buttons, revs your engine, floats your boat, lights your fire? Let's ask God to change us as we open up the motives of our hearts to him this morning.

God calls us to continued change and growth in translating the gospel into action in our lives. We grow weary, become distracted, hit plateaus of various sorts or simply become comfortable in sinful patterns of thinking . . . perhaps similar to the Philippians. These believers were actively serving Christ and the gospel in effective ways but needed to be challenged to continue to grow in obedience to Christ. Specifically they needed to change their complaining into contentment and their individualism into appreciation for spiritual leadership. As much as God may be using our lives and efforts to advance the gospel, we must agree that we need to continue to work hard at growth and change.

When God asks us to change, he always expects us to begin with transformation at the heart level. The why question is huge in addressing your frustrations of changing your lives to conform more to the gospel.

Today and next Sunday we will continue to address the theme of working hard and how the scriptures connect it to our lives as gospel partners. We will ask and answer three questions from Philippians 2:12-18 that will lead us to greater understanding and growth. The questions are:

- What is hard work like in the Christian life?
- Why should a follower of Christ work harder?
- What specific areas in my life should I work harder?

Read Phil. 2:12-18

Let's review what hard work is like in the Christian life.

1. What is hard work like in the Christian life? V.12

The command to 'work out your own salvation' is explained in the following ways:

- a. Hard work does not rest on past accomplishments. 'as you have always obeyed'
- b. Hard work expands beyond past and present comfort zones.  
'as in my presence . . . more in my absence'
- c. Hard work is a sustained effort that is productive. 'work out'
- d. Hard work is appropriately urgent and serious. 'with fear and trembling'

2. Why should a follower of Christ work harder? 12-18

Note the connection between gospel truth and personal motivation to work hard at the gospel in our lives. There are a number of gospel truths that the Apostle mentions to answer the question of why work harder. These are not all the reasons, but these represent key components of our gospel belief system that define and motivate faithful effort rather than casual volunteerism.

The following gospel motives for working hard to transform our thinking and conform our behavior to the gospel are often replaced by inappropriate motives. These include trying to obey or do what is right for personal benefit or return, serving in a ministry for hope of acknowledgment of some kind, trying to do right for fear that something bad will happen if you don't, or making effort to do right out of personal pride because you want to be seen as a good person.

You should work hard at translating the gospel into your life because . . .

**a. You believe that God is at work in you. 13 Col.1:29**

for the one who works mightily in you is God . . . 3 reasons why this motivates . . .

- God initiated his work of grace in your life. 1:6

Col.1:5-6

1Cor. 1:4

1Thess.1:5-6

'For his good pleasure'

- God provides the power to please him with your life. 13

'both to will and to work'

1Cor. 12:6

1Cor.15:10

2Cor.3:5

- God provides the means for connecting with his power in your life.

'it is God who works in you'

Holy Spirit/1Cor.12:11

Bible/1Thess.2:13

Prayer/James 5:16

**b. You know the world is an increasingly darker place. 15**

'in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation'

As God is at work in you, forces of evil are at work all around . . .

- The work of sinful passions Rom. 7:5
- The work of organized evil 2Thess. 2:7
- The work of Satan to blind hearts Eph.2:2

Shine as lights . . .

**c. You expect Jesus to come again to judge and reward. 16**

‘so that in the day of Christ I may be proud’ personal exposure before Christ

- 2 metaphors for comprehensive gospel ministry

Running a race

Labor/work

- Concern for reward – in vain rejected, useless
- You must give an account before Christ

Day of Christ in Phil. 1:6, 10, 23; 3:20; 4:5 1Corinthians 3:10-15

**d. You desire the greater joy that comes with obedience. 17-18**

‘likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me’

- Personal joy of sacrificial service 17
- ‘Together’ joy of sacrificial service 18
- Future joy of sacrificial service 4:1; 1Thess.2:19-20

rejoice 16x in Phil with ‘together’ multiple times

01/10/10

3. What specific areas in my life should I work harder? 14-18

a. Self denying contentment. 14-15

b. Gospel focused community. 16-18

### **Take Aways**

1. Acknowledge your struggle with giving God less than your best effort. Confess and repent.
2. Identify the ways God has been at work in your life in the past year.
3. Acknowledge your need to change the motives of your heart regarding your obedience to Christ.
4. Ask God for help as you begin working to change the way you think about living the gospel.