

Intro: Something many of you may not know about me is that I have rhythm... Does anyone have rhythm in here? It's an appropriate question. We meet at Springstep after all... I can rap, and I can groove... Senior Prom... Well, not that much, but a little bit...

Whether or not you have musical rhythm, we all establish different rhythms or patterns in life that help us get through our day. What kind of rhythms do you have established in your life?

Get ready... Breakfast... Do you go to the gym... Walk your dog when you get off work? ____ Any routines when you tuck the kids into bed at night?

We all have rhythms of daily living. God wants us to establish some healthy rhythms that will enhance our spiritual lives and help us grow in the life he desires for us. Just like we try to brush our teeth, eat 3 meals a day, and ____, so we also should establish healthy spiritual disciplines in our lives. We need rhythms of grace.

“Rhythms of Grace” Philippians 2:12-13

FCF: If you are like me it is so easy to prioritize a busy work week, time with family, and a few interests and other responsibilities to the point where our pursuit of God takes the backseat in our lives. Now, God should be a part of our work and family and hobbies and all things, but I'm referring to a concentrated effort to know God, live for God, and see him work to change us to be more like Christ. This morning I want us to consider how to

The Point: Cultivate rhythms of grace by working out what God works in you.

Look at *Philippians 2:12-13*

I. Discipline yourself to work out your salvation through rhythms of grace (2:12).

- Philippians... Paul planted this church (Acts 16...) They were following hard after God, taking Paul's teaching to heart and growing in their faith.
- He wanted them to continue making progress in their new faith even though he is no longer with them. You know how easy it is for us to depend on others for success. "If they are with me, then I can do a better job." There seems to be a hint of that going on in Philippi. If you look back at 1:27, you see a similar statement. But God is with to enable them to walk in obedience.
- And, it's important to not miss the word "Therefore." Paul says they should obey in light of who Jesus is, what he has done in his own obedience even to the point of death, and the fact that we will one day bow our knee before him. Sobering reminder that we will one day stand before God. Are you ready?

"Work out your salvation"

- Given the holiness of God.. (Shouldn't be hard to grasp if God exists) and given the sinfulness of many (shouldn't be hard to grasp if you watch the news or look in the mirror, ouch!), given these two realities, the greatest question in life is how can we be reconciled to God and be saved?
- Two fundamental answers: "Work for it" or "Receive it." One is earned; the other is a gift.
- We have to be very careful here to not hear Paul saying, "Work for your salvation" It's not as if God does his part, and then we do our part to earn heaven. The Bible clearly says that salvation is a gift, never to be earned by works. **"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)**
- I believe the language here, though potentially difficult to grasp, actually argues for salvation by grace. How? Well, we cannot work out what we do not possess. Salvation is theirs, and now they are to see it progress and grow.
- We have to understand the difference between Justification and sanctification...
- **Justification** happens when God gives us grace to trust in what Jesus did for us on the cross and now he forgives us of all our sin debt and **counts us righteous** in him. Justification **frees us from the penalty of our sin.**

- **Sanctification** is the process of progressively **becoming more righteous**, more like Jesus. So whereas justification frees us from the penalty of our sin, sanctification **frees us from the power of sin** in our lives.
- Paul is covering sanctification in 12-13.

And he says "WORK it out" "work out your salvation with fear and trembling."

- To work out our salvation means to see it grow to maturity. Working out means making progress and developing the character of Christ as he continues to save us from, not just the penalty of our sin, but the power of sin in our lives.
- You will hear people say: "Just let go and let God." Which can be dangerous counsel. Yes, we should trust God and cast our "anxieties on him" BUT even then we have to continue trusting, praying, and setting our minds on Christ, so there is never really a time we completely let go of our responsibility to act.
- On the contrary we are to WORK...
- We each have personal responsibility to pursue Christlikeness. In the words of 2 Peter 1, we must "make every effort." It does not simply happen. That is why theologians have referred to some of the rhythms we can build into our lives as "spiritual disciplines."
- **"God has given us the Disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving his grace. The disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that He can transform us." – Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline**
- Foster says, God continues to sanctify us by his grace, and the disciplines are a means by which that happens. Some of the disciplines include: receiving God's Word, prayer, fasting, worship, service, giving, and regularly meeting with other Christians to name a few.
- They are habits of devotion, NOT legalistic rituals. Legalism is earning our way to God's favor. Ritual is doing what we do without substance. Ritual is empty action.
- Just as exercise promotes physical strength and wellness, so the spiritual disciplines promote spiritual strength, vitality, and health.
- In order to get in shape, we have to make certain choices that will lead to fitness: eat right, exercise regularly, get enough sleep. They must be practiced in a strategic and intentional way.
- **"Train (discipline) yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." (1 Timothy 4:7-8)**
- This does not happen overnight. You think the guys working out at Gold's Gym get ripped by tiptoeing around and picking up 5lb. dumbbells a couple of times a month? No! They are in there multiple times a week, some every day, busting out mad sweats, veins popping out everywhere, throwing up massive amounts of iron. It takes effort and it takes consistency!
- Or to change the analogy: Most of you don't know that I learned to play the guitar in college... calloused fingers... Strum a tune, but it would take days, weeks and months, (okay, years) for me to begin to get to the level of Micah & JC up here...
- *There is immense value here. Present life and the life to come.*
- Disciplined living is the path to freedom. Olympic athletes go through rigorous diet regiments and training programs, so that their body can be free to operate at peak performance.
- This is why we read, pray, worship, serve and share the gospel,
- Seeking God through the disciplines are like sitting under the showers of his grace, by which he cleanses us and fills us with his strength to live for him (maybe omit)
- How spiritually fit are you?

Trans: There is a danger. As we work hard for God and pursue these disciplines, we can quickly begin to do so in our own strength. Self-reliance is our default mode, and it is incredibly damaging to our spiritual life. That is why it is not surprising Paul says "work out" FOR "it is God who works in you."

II. Depend on God to work in you to produce godliness (2:13).

- “We work out our salvation with fear and trembling *precisely because* God is working in us.” – D.A. Carson
- Sanctification is a gracious work of God as he works in the depths of our lives to produce change in us.

GRACE

We have to understand that the disciplines themselves are not the source of grace and strength in our lives. God simply works through the disciplines. He is the source of strength and grace in our lives. Now, I know there are some here that doubt that God can work in you and change you, and there are others who think (whether explicitly now or by your actions tomorrow) that you really don't need these disciplines of grace.

- But listen to the words of Jerry Bridges who says: **“Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God’s grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God’s grace.”** –
- God works in us as we work out in two primary ways. Number one.
 - 1) God works new desires in us. “to will” This is the level of our motivation and will.**
 - It’s not enough to know what we should do, if there is not a desire to see it happen.
 - EX . – It would be nice to lose 20 lbs. but if I’m not *willing* to do anything about it, it a dream without desire. We have to have the right desires, and Paul says God gives us desire to live for him. Every good desire I possess is a result of the gracious work of God.
 - “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection” Chalmers...
 - What happens when we don’t desire God?
 - Pray: Ask!
 - Discipline yourself. Place yourself under streams of grace. This is the whole point of this series. I don’t desire God. Well, oftentimes, I would say the vast majority of the time, it is because our love has grown cold toward God and we have moved away from him. BUT when we worship together, open the Bible, go back to God in prayer, take our eyes off our selves and serve someone, then all of the sudden, the kindling of our desires are stoked into a flame that the Spirit produces in us because we have been exposed to God and his truth through the means of grace.
 - Not only does God give us new desires, these new desires lead to obedience and action.
 - 2) God works new actions in us.**
 - “to act” This is the level of our doing. He gives us the energy to enable us to do the very thing he commands us to do. Love your neighbor. Give up that nasty habit. Speak words that build up your co-workers...
 - In every case, the Spirit gives us the fuel we need to fulfill everything God asks us to do.
 - **“Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this *I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.*” (Colossians 1:28-29, ESV)**
 - Paul says he “toils.” The word means to work “to the point of weariness or exhaustion.” And then he explains further what this looks like by choosing the word “struggle.” He says, “I’m struggling” It’s the greek word *agonizomai*, where we get our word “agonize.” This is Paul’s approach to ministry and the Christian life, but let’s not miss how he is working to the point of agonizing exhaustion. He is doing so with his energy! The energy of God is powerfully at work within him to strengthen him for the task.
 - There is a tiny poem that captures this attributed to John Bunyan, the author of the great literary classic, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, “Run, John, run. The law commands But gives neither feet nor hands. Better news the gospel brings; It bids me fly and gives me wings.”
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 - So, how do we hold these in tension: working out while God is working in, putting all of our best effort forward each day, understanding we need God’s grace to be supplying everything we need to get the job done.
 - Jerry Bridges says our pursuit of godliness must be characterized by “dependent discipline.” My prayer is that you would let that vocabulary get pressed into your heart and manifest itself in your life every day. **“Dependent Discipline.”** We need both, like two wings of a plane, we need both dependence on God’s grace at work in us while we have the discipline to work out our salvation through pursuing God through the means of grace.

- So don't miss Paul's argument: God's activity in us, should be the catalyst for our activity for him. He says, "Work out..." FOR "it is God who works in you" God's action in us should not cause us to to a spiritual vacation, but should serve as an incentive to press on, to work... This should strengthen our resolve to get in the Word, pray, invest in community, serve others, share the gospel . . .
- When I wake up tomorrow morning, August 5th, I can have confidence and put my spiritual hard hat on because I know God delights to give me desires that line up with his desires & he gives me the strength to walk in his ways....

Trans: There are major ramifications for cultivating rhythms of grace!

III. Enjoy the results of gospel renewal through dependent discipline (2:12-15).

What are the results of dependent discipline?

1. We will be changed.

- "We are working out *our own salvation*" after all... Again, the goal when we respond and follow Jesus, is to become more like him. We should all want "gospel renewal" to consistently happen in our lives.
- Gospel renewal, or what has traditionally been called "revival," refers to the power of the gospel transforming our lives in clear and evident ways. We usually assume it happens through some extraordinary set of steps or circumstances, but those who study seasons of spiritual renewal would tell you that extraordinary things happen through the ordinary means of grace.
- This is what Tim Keller says in his book *Center Church*... "**Gospel renewal or revival is an intensification of the normal operations of the Spirit (conviction of sin, regeneration, sanctification, assurance of grace) through the ordinary means of grace (preaching the Word, prayer, and the sacraments).**"
- Now, if this is true in individuals, what would it take for a church to experience gospel renewal? Think about that . . . How can we see the Spirit do a unique work in and through our church? Here's the simple answer: we need a large number of people experiencing personal gospel renewal.
- Do you get that? So if we want to see renewal on a wide scale, we need the Spirit to work through the ordinary means of grace in an intensified manner, so that many people are hungering after God, pursuing holiness, sharing the gospel, and making sacrifices that the kingdom may advance in us and through us.

Trans: what else happens when we cultivate the rhythms of grace? What we just talked about . . .

2. The church will be changed.

- In verse 14, we see some practical examples of what it looks like to work out our salvation as God works in us. Paul says, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." This is only one small example of what will happen when the Christ rules our lives. Our relationship with God necessarily changes how we treat one another.
- And then I love this, as we cultivate the disciplines of grace . . .

3. The world will be changed.

- Verse 15 . . . "*So you will shine like stars!*"
- When we practice godliness and display God's work in our lives, Paul says, we will shine as lights in the world." In other words, there will be something distinct about us that people will have to take notice.
- This happened over and over again during "Serve Medford" week.
- Story. Story.
- The world will be changed when we allow God to work in us.
- Most importantly, more than us being changed or our church being changed or our city being changed . . . God receives the glory.

4. And God will be glorified.

- Everything in our life is for his glory. This is why we exist; and it is why this church exists...
- Look back at verse 13 one more time: "FOR HIS GOOD PLEASURE"

Conclusion:

- You can't work out what you have not received. Admit your need for God. Ask him to forgive you. Turn from your sin. Trust in Jesus to rescue you and follow him forever.
"Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (Hebrews 13:20-21)