

**Pastor Paul Bawden
Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, February 27, 2011
"God At Work In Us"
Philippians 2:12-18**

I understand that a Sunday School teacher was talking to her children about God. She asked them how they would describe God. One little fellow raised his hand, and said, "God is a great big Presbyterian minister."

That little fellow had some idea, perhaps, that his pastor represented God to him.

There are certainly many ideas about God in our world today.

But what about the word, God, that we use?

What comes to our minds when we hear the word, God?

What comes to our minds when we start thinking about God?

Here's what A.W. Tozer has said about the word, God.

"Without doubt, the mightiest word in any language is its word for God."

Tozer goes on to say that a right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse.

Then Tozer adds that he believes there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God.

What God is Tozer referring to when he makes that kind of statement?

Tozer is referring to the biblical God -- the God who the Apostle Paul is writing about in our text today in Philippians 2:12-18.

In fact, in our text today, where our year verse is couched, we are told why the biblical God is distinct from all other gods, yes, unique in His person and work.

Note the text.

Let's start with Philippians 2:13 – our year verse.

"It is God who is at work in you."

I. God's unique in His Person (Philippians 2:13a).

The word for God here in the original text is "Theos." It's the equivalent to Elohim in the Old Testament, translated God.

(1) Theos (God) is deity.

Theos in referring to the biblical God means that He is true deity. In His nature, He is deity, He is God.

Theos is the word that John used when he penned in John 1:1.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God (Theos) and the Word was God (Theos).” This means that God the Father is deity, and the Word, referring to Christ, God’s Son, is God as well.

That really gets those who deny the Trinity upset. One cult translates this first verse in John’s Gospel this way, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was a god.” But that is not what the text says. The text was changed in their so-called Bible to fit their theology that Jesus was a created being. He was not deity in nature. The text in John 1 says just the opposite – Jesus is truly God – deity in His substance, His nature.

2. Theos (God) is eternal.

Theos not only tells us that the biblical God is deity, but Theos also tells us that the biblical God is eternal.

Paul penned this in I Timothy 1:17:

“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God (Theos), be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Theos had no beginning and has no end. He exists in and of Himself.

As the Moses penned in Psalm 90 – From everlasting to everlasting you are GOD.

Theos is deity and eternal. That certainly makes Him distinct and unique from all other gods that man uses for his idols and his many ideas about who God is.

God the Father is not a created being. Jesus Christ is not a created being. The Holy Spirit is not a created being. They exist as one eternal God in three persons or personalities.

That means

3. Theos (God) is immortal.

What does that mean? That the biblical God is enduring – he cannot die. Actually, He has life within Himself – eternal life – that goes on forever. Using this word Paul is amplifying the word, eternal.

God is also

4. Theos (God) is invisible.

The word means that God can’t be seen with the human eye. This doesn’t mean that the biblical God is not real. It is telling us that God dwells in the world of invisible reality unless He makes the decision to let us see some of His invisible reality.

In fact, as there is a true world of invisible reality in God’s spiritual world, there is also the false world of invisible reality which Paul wrote about in Ephesians 6, when he talks about the battle that believers are in against spiritual wickedness in high places. The believer in Christ

has victory over that false world of invisible reality through using the armor of Christ based upon the death, burial, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Moses asked the LORD to show him His glory. He wanted a vision of God (Exodus 33:18-23). God granted Moses His request, but not fully, for God told him that no man could see His face and live. Moses was put in the cleft of the rock, and the LORD in His glory passed by, covering Moses with His hand. God said that He would take away His hand as He passed by and Moses would see His back but not His face.

An amazing revelation of God to Moses – the invisible God becoming visible in the sense recorded. Of course, God is Spirit, and He may have been taking on a form so Moses would understand that the invisible God can become visible to a certain extent.

In the Old Testament as well it seems that the Angel of Jehovah or the LORD was a manifestation of the invisible God – perhaps a preincarnate manifestation of the coming Christ.

Jesus, of course, was the visible manifestation of the invisible God in human flesh. He told Philip and His disciples that he who had seen Him had seen the Father (John 14:9).

Jesus also taught, that blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see Theos – God (Matthew 5:8).

It seems that some day the believers in their new bodies in eternity will see their heavenly Father.

That means

5. Theos (God) is the only God.

What did Paul say in I Timothy 1:17? TO THE ONLY THEOS.

That means that the eternal deity, the immortal, the invisible THEOS is the one and only true God.

God spoke through Isaiah the prophet:

“For I am God (Elohim), and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning” (Isaiah 46:9-10).

There is no other God like the biblical Theos –

He is deity, eternal, the only one among all the other gods man has created or tries to create, even mixing a little of Theos (God’s deity) with his anthropos (his humanity).

In addition. . . .

6. Theos (God) is Sovereign.

I Timothy 1:17 called Theos – King – to the King eternal.

He has royalty and has the power, the knowledge & wisdom, and the ability to reign in His kingdom and to defeat the evil one as well. As Sovereign, He is the Almighty God who is working out His plan for the good of His people and the world for His glory.

We need to always remember that the biblical God (Theos) reigns as we watch the happenings in our state, our nation, and the world. He is in control and HE will have the last word. You can count on it!!

Then

7. Theos (God) is personal.

The biblical God doesn't sit in His ivory tower and do nothing about the needs of those He has created. We see His love expressed directly to Adam and Eve when they sinned in the Garden of Eden. He provide His forgiveness through His grace and mercy. We see God's compassion shown to His people Israel when the nation was in Egyptian bondage. He identified with their affliction and their cry for help and deliverance. He responded in love and came to provide deliverance for His people.

Ultimately, God sent His Son into the world to provide forgiveness and eternal life for those who had even rejected HIM.

God (Theos) so loved the world that He gave His one and only SON (John 3:16).

Herein is love not that we loved God (Theos), but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins (I John 4:10).

But God (Theos) proved His love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

No other God like the biblical God.

He is totally unique in His PERSON.

He is deity, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only ONE, sovereign, and personal.

That's why when we look at this verse and read, "For it is God (Theos), we need to be reminded of what God is referred to here. The one an only biblical God totally unique in His PERSON, distinct from all other gods.

II. God's unique in His work.

Note Philippians 2:13 again.

"For it is Theos who is at work." Let's stop there.

1. The meaning of the word, work.

Work is the word from which we get energy.

It means to be active power, to bring about activity.

It is also in the present tense, meaning that the active power is always in process, or always in gear. God's energy is constantly being exercised.

2. The better translation of these words.

For it is Theos who is continually using His energy – His active power –

3. The explanation of God continually using His energy – His power.

When we talk about God's energy or power, we have to talk about the source of that energy or power. Where does it come from?

We look at a light switch. We turn it on. And pronto the lights come on. There has to be a source for the energy (the power) that causes the lights to dispel the darkness in the room.

So it is with the energy of Theos. There has to be a source for God's eternal energy.

From where does the energy of Theos come?

Certainly the source of God's energy – His power- comes from His eternal person. He is the Almighty Sovereign God as we just considered in the reality that He is KING. He is the Almighty God.

But where does God ultimately display His energy – Yes, His eternal power? Only one place. It's in the death, burial, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's the power of the cross through the open tomb. It is the eternal resurrection life, energy and power of the risen bodily, Jesus Christ.

That's why the Apostle Paul penned that he gloried only in the cross.

That's why the Apostle Paul said that the preaching of the cross is the power of God unto salvation.

That's why the Apostle Paul said that he was crucified with Christ, and it is no longer him who lived, but Christ was living in him, and the life that he now lived in the flesh, he lived by faith in the Son of God, who love him and gave himself up for him.

What did Paul talk about when he went into the synagogues? It was that Jesus Christ had come and died, was buried, and rose again to provide forgiveness and eternal life. Read Acts 17:1-3. Paul on the Sabbath went to the synagogue and reasoned with them from the Old Testament Scriptures that Christ had to suffer and rise again.

The ultimate of God's power, His eternal energy is wrapped up in the death, burial and bodily resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. It's the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That's why there is so much opposition to Jesus Christ as truly God and man, and His eternal work on the cross, His death, and bodily resurrection.

The cults and major religions deny who Jesus really is and what He did on the cross, His burial and the open tomb. Some in this coming Easter season will talk about Christ's resurrection, even celebrate His resurrection, but it will not be a bodily resurrection – just the spirit of Christ's resurrection, which means that there is no eternal energy, no eternal power of Christ's bodily resurrection. The celebration of Christ's resurrection is a shame. It has no substance.

It's like buying a new car and not putting any fuel in the tank so it can have the energy to go down the road.

No bodily resurrection Christ no true supernatural power of Christ available for any one!

But note that it is not just eternal energy and power that the bodily resurrection of Christ provides and continually works,

There is also here

III. The unique experience for you and me.

“For it is Theos who is producing eternal energy, eternal resurrection power IN YOU.”

IN YOU is referring to the Philippian believers, as well as all believers in Jesus Christ, which includes you and me who are following Jesus Christ today.

So what Paul is saying here is that the eternal resurrection energy, power, of the risen Christ is for us, for our individual lives.

Note what that involves.

1. It assumes a person has accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

In Philippians 2:12, Paul used the word salvation – soteria – referring to their having accepted Christ as their personal Savior having received His forgiveness and eternal life. Have accepted Christ the penalty of their sin has been paid for and they are a redeemed people, declared righteous before God, reconciled to God, and member of His eternal family.

2. Since a person has accepted Christ as personal Savior, Christ lives in him with His resurrection energy, is resurrection power, yes His mind lives in the believer.

That’s why Paul penned that it is Theos who is being energized, empowered in you, in your very being. That resurrection power and life, includes the very mind of Christ we talked about from the first part of Philippians 2 that we considered last week.

Each believer in Jesus Christ, then, has living in him or her the resurrection energy, power of the living Christ is always at work, always in process to work through the mind of Christ that the believer possesses.

3. God makes the resurrection energy – power come alive in the believer’ life.

“For it is Theos who is energized, empowered through YOU, both to will and to work .

The biblical God does not go to sleep with His resurrection energy in the believer.

(1) God’s intent

To will – to continually will (present tense) – that is carry out Christ’s resurrection power in and through us as believer’s in Christ. **It’s God’s will that our lives give evidence of His resurrection power at work in our daily lives with HIM.**

(2) God's operation.

To work – to continually work (present tense) – work is the same word as just used, (God who is at work). So to continually energize, empower.

What the Scripture is saying is that it is God's will that Christ's resurrection power and energy be activated in each of our lives as followers of Jesus Christ.

God wants our lives as His disciples to experience His resurrection energy and power at work in our lives not just once but on a continual moment by moment basis.

Let's give God praise. Let's give God a high-five so to speak.

God wants our lives to experience daily His resurrection life and power – His eternal energy at work in us as followers of Jesus Christ!!

But where does that leave you and me? I'm glad you asked that question.

4. The believer must obey the Lord for God's eternal resurrection energy to be activated in his life (Philippians 2:12).

Paul told the Philippians that they have obeyed the Lord in the past, but they must continue as they did when he was with them, and now in his absence, to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

(1) The meaning of the word, work.

Note the word – work. It a different word from the words translated "work" in Philippians 2:13 – For there as we mentioned the words, work, are referring to God's energy, His resurrection power that resides in an individual.

Here the word, work, means to put into practice, to live out, put into the shoe leather of one's life, as we might say.

The word, work, is also in the present tense (on-going experience), and it is a command.

The Scripture, then is saying, "Continually put into practice in your lives your salvation you have received from Christ."

This tells us that salvation is not just accepting Christ as personal Savior, it involves a daily walk with one's Lord.

For such to happen in one's life, it involves the believer' attitude.

(2) The attitude for putting into practice our salvation.

****One of fear or reverent amazement** – a sense of awe of God for who He is and what He can do in one's life – realizing that He is the eternal personal God who is sovereign – meaning worship should be a life-style. (The believer doesn't have to fear God, but believers

should have a sense of amazement of who God is - - -A sense of wonder of His holiness, greatness, goodness, and glory.

****One of trembling – or one of veneration** – recognizing the solemn responsibility of submitting to the Jesus Christ as Lord, as Master.

The Scripture is telling us here if the resurrection energy and power of the risen Christ is going to be activated in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit, we need to recognize who God is in His holiness, and then let Him, by obeying HIM, release His resurrection energy through us.

Paul is saying here that the believer must be in concert with God who is willing and ready to activate His energy, His resurrection power in and through his life.

It is a joint effort between God and you, and God and me (That's what the little word, FOR, is all about in Philippians 2:13).

The Holy Spirit works in the life of the believer, but the believer must give way to the Holy Spirit who will bring alive the resurrection power of God in him.

This is wrapped up in that one word, OBEY. – Submitting to the Lord in the Holy Spirit's power, God let's His energy lose in the believer's life.

It's well to note here that God does not drive us to obey. He convicts by His Holy Spirit, but He works with us, when we don't obey, until we will obey.

Certainly God can take charge of our lives and make us do anything, if He so desires. But God respects our individuality and our wills.

But like the prodigal son, who left home and lost all his money in his lustful lifestyle, until finally he came to the end of himself eating what the pigs did. The text tells us in Luke 15:17 that "when he came to his senses," that is, he realized how foolish he was, and what he once had with his father, he returned home and told his father that he had sinned against heaven, and in your sight. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

What happened here? The young man's will was broken, and he returned to his father. His father forgive him and celebrated.

That's why our wills need to be keep soft toward our Lord, open to do His will, which lets His resurrection energy and power come alive in our lives.

When we submit to the Lord on a daily basis we can put into practice that resurrection power of the Lord not in our strength, but in the strength of the living Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

What should be happening in our lives when we let the resurrection energy of Christ be activated in our lives by obeying the Lord?

5. The evidence of God's resurrection energy put into practice in the believer's life (Philippians 2:14-18).

The Scripture gets right to practical living in God's resurrection power.

(1) Must be harmony in relationships (2:14).

"Do all things" (a present command and it is a command.

**Without grumbling – grumbling means secret to make secret and sullen comments. To cause discontent – murmuring.

**Without disputing – without contention.

(2) Be a light continually for the Lord (2:15).

"Continually appear, shine, are visible"

That involves living a life that is blameless – without offense.

A life that is innocent – or without deceit – one is truthful in one's words and how one deals with people.

One is to live without offense and without deceit for the believer lives in a world that is crooked (wicked) and perverse (corrupt – erroneous).

The world has not changed as it? Our lives are to give evidence that we are living in Christ's resurrection power and life.

(3) Continually hold to (observing, taking heed to) the Word of Life (2:16).

That could refer to Jesus Christ, who is the Word and Life, or to the Word of God, the Bible. In either case, the believer should give evidence in his life as he lives in the power of Christ's resurrection life that he is living by the direction of God's eternal Word, the Bible which shows forth who Jesus Christ is and what He has done.

Paul knows that if the Philippians live by the Word of God, that he will be able to glory (exult, or give laudatory testimony) of God's eternal energy at work in their lives.

(4) Lives a life of sacrificial service for one's Lord (2:17-18).

Paul looks at his life of ministry to the Lord and to others as a drink offering (figuratively pouring out himself) as he gave himself in sacrificial service to the Philippians. Such selfless service caused Paul to be filled with joy and he wanted to share that with the Philippians.

He wanted them to be able to rejoice as well in their sacrificial service to him, not only while he was with them, but also in the financial help they had given Paul.

It seems here that the Scripture is telling us that sacrificial service for the Lord should be a joy not a duty or drudgery. Paul served the Lord with gladness in spite of the challenges because His live was activated by Christ's resurrection life and energy in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I trust it is the same for us. That is it a joy to serve the Lord even though at times it is not easy. God keeps the books. He rewards faithfulness!!

IV. The unique outcome of living for the Lord in concert with Him (Philippians 2:13,17-18).

"For it is God who is energizing you with His resurrection power, both to continually will, and to continually energize you ON BEHALF OF HIS GOOD PLEASURE."

This is what God continually energizing the believer who is obeying Him in the power of the Holy Spirit brings about.

IT IS ALL ON BEHALF HIS GOOD PLEASURE OR FOR HIS PURPOSE, FOR HIS INTENTION.

What is that referring to?

It is referring to several things here.

1. God receives pleasure or joy from the believer who lets the resurrection energy of God be energized in and through his life (2:13).

The Psalmist puts it this way, "but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love" (Psalm 147:11).

That's an amazing thought, isn't it? That our obedience to the Lord in using His indwelling resurrection power brings pleasure, yes, delight to the Lord.

John said that he had no greater joy than to see his children walk in truth. God receives joy from His followers obeying Him in His resurrection power.

2. The believer is blessed by living for the Lord in His resurrection power (2:17-18).

Paul rejoices in the privilege to serve the Lord. "Share my joy with you." Remember Paul is in prison and he still experiences God's joy as he ministers there and remembers his service among the Philippians. He wants the Philippians also to rejoice in and take joy in their service for the Lord and share that with Paul.

How great is that! Serving the Lord should not be a drudgery. Even in the challenges, Paul takes joy in serving the Lord because he is serving the Lord not men. As God takes pleasure in our serving Him in His power, He wants us also to take joy in the reality that we can do that. That's why the Scripture says that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

3. God is glorified when the believer lets His power work in and through him (I Corinthians 10:31).

God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him, penned John Piper. Those who are most satisfied in the Lord (serve Him with awe and veneration in obedience) will certainly bring glory, show off God's resurrection life and power in their daily life with the LORD.

That is why God has placed us as believers on this planet – TO FIND ETERNAL FULFILLMENT IN ALL WE THINK, SAY, AND DO, BY DEPENDING UPON GOD'S INDWELLING POWER WHICH BRINGS GOD PLEASURE FOR HIS GLORY.

MAY WE LET GOD ENERGIZE US THIS WEEK TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WILL FOR HIS GLORY!!

Perhaps you remember the film, Chariots of Fire – a phenomenal film.

It's a fact-based story of two athletes in the 1924 Paris Olympics: Eric Liddell (called the flying Scotsman) a devout Scottish Christian who runs for the glory of God, and Harold Abrahams, an English Jew who runs to overcome prejudice.

In the film, Eric explains to his sister why he runs, **"I believe that God made me for a purpose. But He also made me fast, and when I run, I feel His pleasure."**

Eric would not run in trial heats for the 100 meter race, his speciality, for they were on Sunday. Abrahams ran in that race and won the gold medal. Eric instead ran in the 400 meter race, which he was not expected to win. A friend handed him this note from I Samuel 2:30. "He that honors me, him will I honor," right before the race.

Eric won the 400 meter race in a startling upset, receiving the gold medal. In an instance he was internationally famous. Instead of basking in all the glory of winning, Eric returned to China to do missionary work for his Lord with his friend Bob serving with the London Missionary Society. Later, Eric would die in a Japanese prison camp.

Eric had learned that God takes pleasure in his life when he was obedient to his Lord, resulting in God's resurrection energy energizing him to accomplish God's will for His glory.

I trust we have learned that as well, which can encourage us on to do God's will in His energy, His resurrection power.

"For it is God who is at work in us, both to will and to work on behalf of His good pleasure."

