

Look Out
[written oral form]

Philippians 2:12-30
Summer theme “Joy Shines”

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The concept of shining like a star or light is nothing new.
In fact, Paul wrote about it over 2,000 years ago.

Basically, being as God intends for us / being Christ like brings joy and wholeness.
God’s way is an outward flow, and that is more than just intentional giving. **That radiant existence shines like a light.**

This is a natural outcome. We cannot fabricate this light.
Paul calls it shining like a star in the darkness.
He is suggesting that most people live in darkness.

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To fully appreciate this simile, we need to know darkness.

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Modern civilization has diminished and isolated darkness.
Light pollution is so intrusive that nighttime is no longer dark.
Even astronomers are complaining about the new source of light pollution—satellites.
Since 2019, over 700 Space X satellites have been put into orbit. Most are connected like a long train. Their reflective glow is inhibiting telescope viewing of space.
[Scientific American, Sept. 10, 2020]

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We even attempt to hide human bleakness and despair with urban design, such as expressways that skirt the “bad” neighborhoods.  
To be sure, obsessing about mass media’s endless barrage of calamity and tragedy is not being in the dark.  
That is merely being informed about the despair.

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When we moved to our place, out in the country, in rural Saskatchewan, I discovered darkness.
I had been on cave tours where they turn off the lights, and that was DARK, yet it was for a moment.

Still, what I really discovered from the darkness was the power of light. The stars shone brilliantly, and a full moon was amazing. It would illuminate and end the darkness of night.
We miss that contrast in the city.

Light is an outward flow. Light shines. It illuminates and its appeal is magnetic.
Light is an unfettered response from energy.

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In today’s text, Paul is demonstrating and teaching how we will shine like the stars.

Paul began by stating, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling."
The fear and trembling means awe and reverence.
This will make more sense in the next verse.

"Work out your salvation"
This is obviously a process, AND it is not about saving oneself.
Too often we regard salvation as a personal endeavor – a "personal salvation."
That notion in selfish and inward thinking.

Paul is addressing the community. The "You" is plural.

Moreover, salvation is broader than that. Salvation affects others and all of creation.
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The call to work out / to improve comes without specifics.  
Paul does not include any details here.  
There is flexibility in this,....and yes, we would be wise to learn from the experts, such as Paul,  
who worked hard to be like Christ.

"Work out" strongly implies workout. The one word, workout.

I do not know about you, but I tend to groan when I hear that.  
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Yet, we truly admire those Olympic athletes who endlessly prepared by working out and practicing.

De Grasse was amazing in how he could speed down the track. All of them were so impressive, the swimmers, kayakers, the soccer players and runners.
Wow,.... Just wow.
And, wow to all the preparation and hard work to become so radiant.

Remarkable, but they were not alone.
They had coaches all along the way, and their family supported them.
Evan Dunfee credited his family for motivating him during the last kilometer of his 50K run walk.
More than likely, the athletes felt their nation cheering them on.

Compare this to working out Our salvation.
We are not alone in working out our salvation.
And, as Paul noted in verse 13, "God is at work in you, enabling you to **will** and to **work** God's good pleasures."

This is much more than a coach.
God gives us the desire/ the will...and God empowers us to do the work.
God is the spark / the power within.....and that will inspire awe and reverence.

Nevertheless, improving / growing takes work and repetition.

We need to choose to do God's good pleasures AND practice doing that.

Which brings up the next point.

Complaining, or as Paul calls it, "murmuring and arguing" is counterproductive.

Complaining is inward focused. That is the wrong direction.

Paul contrasts that with the line about shining like a star.

A light shines outward.

Complaining is inward and not helpful in working **out** our salvation.

Learning to be / to live with an outward flow and view is what we need to work on and practice.

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I know, I know.....that is not easy.

Every morning, my back tells me "hello", as do my knees and other parts of my body.

Instead of starting the day with self-pity, I am practicing cognitive therapy.

I tell myself, "Hey, I sure had fun earning those scars, aches and pains."

*Sometimes*

*that works.*

*I am still practicing / still in training.*

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Working out our salvation includes mastering an outward view / an outward energy.

To be sure, we will not make any progress if we think this workout / all this practicing is from self-discipline.

That is inward thinking.

This is not a duty or a burden. Both can lead to bitterness, and again that is inward thinking.

The working **out** includes our community and the power and inspiration comes from God.

God is bubbling up inside us like a spark in a dry forest.

God, through Christ, is showing us the way.

God's spirit within is enabling us and cheering us on. Cheering us on to see the love and beauty and to be that, too.

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So, what's the problem?

Why are we not illuminating the night like a meteor?

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Light illuminates. The light of the world exposes injustices and all kinds of weakness and flaws.

Such exposure can make **us** feel vulnerable and frail.

That is uncomfortable.

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I am going to an excellent physical therapist.

At each session I am put in the spot light.
She examines how my body is working.
A coach does the same thing with an athlete.

My flaws and failings are revealed. They are the areas that need work / that need to improve.
That process is discouraging,...IF I stay there.

After some painful manipulations, I am given exercises with the outward view of arriving at a better place.

I am looking forward. I am improving, but it required being exposed.
I had to confront my condition.

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In church speak, we call that phase "confession."

We need to reveal our truth so that we, together, can proceed to work out our salvation.

Most importantly, let us keep in mind that God is empowering us and cheering us on.  
All together this creates an explosion of love energy that beams out like a star in the night.  
This is joy shining.  
This is love shining outward.

The light is the outcome/ the result. It is not the goal.  
The purpose /goal is being/ living in wholeness in God's good pleasure. Or, as Paul called it,  
"The word of life."

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There is a lot of darkness in the world.
The light is both needed and dreaded.
The divine light exposes, yet then it heals and restores.
It is God's love.

When we are working out OUR salvation, all together with God, the world becomes a brighter and more hopeful place.

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The rest of the passage is about Paul's outward view.

Keep in mind, he was in prison. He was not in a good place.  
Yet, he did NOT complain.  
Instead, he praised and encouraged the community.  
He wrote about how he was sending others to help them.  
He was demonstrating living/being with an out flowing spirit.

In doing so, Paul was actually working out his salvation, too.  
Joy truly does shine.

