

Working Out Your Salvation

Philippians 2:12-13

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

There has always been a tension between works and grace in the way of salvation.

We know that both are required, but how do they relate to each other.

Very few passages put the two together in one passage as Paul does here.

And we only get into trouble when we try to reconcile, as we see it, these two seemingly contradicting doctrines.

- I. Therefore,
 - A. This points back to the previous verses concerning the obedience of Jesus Christ.
 - B. As He was obedient so then should we be obedient.
- II. My beloved,
 - A. Paul reminds them of his love for these believers.
 - B. Paul was close to all those that he ministered to.
 - 1. It was not a job it was a ministry of love.
 - 2. You cannot minister to people if you do not love people.
 - 3. You will burn out and quit.
 - C. Of course his love was based on the love of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. For Paul knew that the Lord loved him and loved those to whom he ministered.
 - 2. It was out of this love that Paul spent his life and would spend himself for them.
- III. As you have always obeyed,
 - A. Obedience is the rule not the exception.
 - 1. True Christians have a deep internal desire to please Jesus with their lives.
 - 2. This does not mean that they never stumble or fall, but it means that that is the exception not the rule.
 - B. Paul notes that it is easier to obey when you are being watched and encouraged.
 - 1. They had been submissive and obedient while Paul was with them.

2. He was careful to watch over their souls as a loving shepherd watches over a flock of sheep.
- C. Not as in my presence only
1. We should be wary of those who seem to be concerned with obedience only when the preacher is around.
 2. For the Lord is always present.
- D. But now much more in my absence
1. Real character is what you are when no one is watching.
 2. But then the Lord is always watching.
- IV. Work out your own salvation
- A. Salvation has three tenses.
1. We have been saved.
 - a. Through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ we are justified in the sight of God.
 2. We are being saved.
 - a. This is what Paul is here referring to.
 - b. This has a term, sanctification.
 - (1) NCOF Article 10. Of Sanctification: We believe that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means--especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.
 - c. It is not a single act but is a series of progressive acts.
 - d. 2 Peter 1:5-8 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.⁸ For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. NKJV
 3. We shall be saved.

- a. This is glorification.
 - B. With fear
 - 1. This is not the idea of terror as one scrambling to save themselves from a raging river or a pursuing lion.
 - 2. Instead it is the idea of reverence and seriousness.
 - C. And trembling
 - 1. Paul uses similar language to describe different place and situations in which he ministered.
- V. For it is God
 - A. God
 - 1. You cannot do it by yourself.
 - 2. You can not do it with a denomination program.
 - 3. We can do a catization of our children, and we should, but without God's Spirit working in those children it will not take.
 - 4. They will just be sinners who know the proper answers to the questions.
 - 5. They will not be saved from the heart.
 - a. Rom 10:10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, NKJV
 - B. Who works
 - 1. Since it is God who works there can be no failure.
 - 2. Philippians 1:6 (NKJV) 6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;
 - 3. Romans 8:28-30 (NKJV) 28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.
 - 4. Perseverance in the faith is the duty of every true believer, and yet not the power of their security. It is, however, the unmistakable and inevitable evidence of divine power operating in the soul (Col. 1:29). MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Philippians.

5. The glorious truth is that God is to be praised for our salvation.
 6. But we must understand that God does not fail.
 - a. So if you claim to be a Christian and it looks like God has not been able to bring you through it all, then you might be a goat and not a sheep.
- C. In you
1. This is not a legal thing like justification where God declares you righteous.
 2. But rather God works on your will, where you not only do not do wrong things but you do not want to do those things that God has forbidden.
 3. Instead you delight to the will of God.
- D. Both to will and to do
1. This gives God the glory.
 2. This means that we can claim nothing as our own.
 3. As Jonah said, "Salvation is of the Lord." Jonah 2:9
- E. For His good pleasure.
1. Eph 1:3-12
 - a. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.
 - b. ⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,¹⁰ that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth -- in Him.¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. NKJV