

A "Work Out"

In Philippians 2:12 Paul wrote, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." That phrase is quoted a lot, but I wonder how many of us have ever stopped to consider what it actually means. Here are a few thoughts on what it means to "work out your salvation."



What did Jesus say the rich man must sell in order to have treasure in heaven?

Paul was saying he hoped to be released from prison and come to Philippi again (Philippians 1:26). He began urging them in verse 27 to let their "manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ." Then, at length, Paul explained the "manner of life" that was "worthy of the gospel of Christ." He told the Philippians to be unified, "standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (1:27), in spite of the suffering they must endure. He continued to encourage them to be "of the same mind," have "the same love," and to be "in full accord and of one mind" (Philippians 2:2).

Then Paul continued to tell them that based on who Jesus is and what Jesus did at the cross, they should, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than [themselves]" (Philippians 2:3). This is the context of Philippians 2:12-13. Paul is urging the Philippians to be (especially in his absence) selflessly united. If you miss that, you will miss the entire point of what Paul is saying.

"Work Out" The Greek word translated, "work out" means to work in order to bring something to completion or fulfillment.

Paul was telling them to strive to bring their salvation to its complete fulfillment in their lives. Essentially, he was reiterating what he said in Philippians 1:27, "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ..." Or, as he worded it to the Christians in Ephesus, "Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (Ephesians 4:1). Interestingly, the context in all of these passages is Christian unity.

So in other words, salvation is not worked out in our lives – it has not been completed in us – until we are of one mind and spirit with our brothers and sisters in Christ. When there is "grumbling or disputing" (2:14) in the church, that's when we need this admonishment to work out our salvation. That's when we need to be reminded, "if there is any encouragement in Christ," then be "of the same mind" (2:1-2).

"Your Own" Sometimes we emphasize the "your own" of this passage, as if Paul was saying this is something each person must do on his or her own. That's ironic, because the context is about Christian unity. Furthermore, all of the verbs in this passage are plural, not singular. Paul is saying this to a group, not to an individual. He is telling them they have to do this on "their own," because he is not there to help them.

So, when we say to someone, "Well, you have to work out your own salvation and I have to work out mine," we are saying something COMPLETELY different than Paul was saying. WE work out OUR salvation collectively, by being of one mind and humbly submitting to one another. This can only be done in the context of a church family.

"With Fear and Trembling" When we understand that the context is about being transformed by the gospel so that we are at one with our Christian family, then it is very easy to understand how the phrase, "with fear and trembling" fits with what Paul wrote to other churches. In Ephesians 5:21, he wrote that we submit to one another, "out of reverence for Christ."

Because we revere Christ, because we are in awe of who He is and what He has done, because we fear disappointing Him, because we desperately want to live up to our calling as children of God, we submit to one another. We prefer one another. We do not insist on our own way. Reverence for Christ looks like selfless unity in the church.

"God Who Works in You" Finally, in verse 13, Paul wrote that God was working in them, "both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Through the encouragement that is in Christ, the comfort from His love, and the participation in the Spirit, the Philippians were being transformed from the inside out.

When we are buried with Jesus in baptism, the Spirit of God and the truth of the Gospel go to work on our hearts and our lives to transform us. But we cannot be passive in this transformation. We must actively imitate the humility of Christ. We must become like Him. We must surrender to Him. We must work hard to be completed.

Christ is working in us, in order to present the church to Himself "in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Ephesians 5:27).

What Salvation Looks Like... The New Testament consistently teaches that salvation looks like saved people loving each other with a selfless love. If we are not living that out, then we are not saved people. Consider 1 John 3:14-18:

"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."

Let us together work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in us, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

<https://radicallychristian.com/what-does-it-mean-to-work-out-your-own-salvation>

To all our visitors: *Please feel free to participate!*

You should expect to hear singing with voices only, a few "family" announcements, prayers spoken, and see the Lord's Supper offered, then free-willed giving, and gospel preaching from the Bible.

Any response is up to you and will be kindly received.

We are glad you decided to worship God with us on this first day of the week!

Bday/Anniv Lunch: 2nd Sunday...

NMCCH: Spray & Wash and Bar Bath Soap
(pick up **April 6, 2019**)

Friday Bible Study: at 7PM (2/22). Romans chapters 1 through 6.

Singing: Morton St, 7PM, Tuesday (2/26).

VBS Planning Meeting: To be determined...

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