

WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION

TEXT: PHIL. 2:12-16

Introduction:

1. Philippians 2:12 says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”
2. We are to work out our salvation, not work for our salvation. We do not work for God in order to be saved; we work for God because we *are* saved.
3. A Roman Catholic relative once sent me a lengthy email, full of RC teachings, and he included Philippians 2:12 (from a RCC translation). His RC translation says, “you must work to earn your salvation, in anxious fear.”
4. Of course, this is not what the Scripture says. The Bible does not teach that one can earn his salvation. The word “earn” is not found anywhere in the King James Bible.
5. The Bible does not say, “work to earn your salvation in anxious fear.” In fact, Phil. 4:6 says, “Be careful (anxious) for nothing.”
6. Philippians 2:12 says, “Work out your own salvation,” not “work for your own salvation.” “Work out your own salvation” means, “bring it to its ultimate conclusion.”
7. The conclusion is when we will stand before the Lord face to face (cf. Phil. 2:16 – “the day of Christ”). What a day, glorious day that will be! This verse refers to the judgment seat of Christ.
8. The RC translation of Phil. 2:12 (mistranslation) says, “in anxious fear” rather than the correct translation “fear and trembling.” “Fear and trembling” (2:12) does not mean that Christians fear being cast off into hell (or a fictitious, non-existent place called “purgatory”).
9. “Fear and trembling” signify humility and vigilance. We must be vigilant because this world is no friend of grace. We must be vigilant because the flesh is weak. We must be vigilant because our adversary the devil is like a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8).

I. WE NEED THE RIGHT ZEAL

II. WE NEED THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

III. WE NEED THE RIGHT TESTIMONY

I. THE RIGHT ZEAL

1. Again, let me make it very plain that no one was ever saved by good works (cf. Eph. 2:8, 9). But those who are truly saved were “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10).
2. And notice that it is God who “hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10b).

3. And it is God “which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).
4. Therefore, we should be “zealous of good works” (Titus 2:11-14).
5. It is evident that the recipients of Paul’s epistle to the Philippians were already saved – they were “saints” (1:1). Paul is not telling them to work for their salvation. He is telling them (and us) to “work out” our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12).
6. There is an important principle here: Christ must first work in us before He can work through us. We see this in the life of Moses. Why did he have to spend 40 years on the backside of a desert? God was working in him.
7. Think of Joseph, Daniel, David, the apostle Paul, et al. Read the biographies of great men of God. D.L. Moody started out by bringing little street kids to Sunday School.
8. We cannot serve God in the energy of the flesh. If we try, we will fail. Too many Christians drag themselves to church and their heart is not in it. They are serving God in the flesh. Beloved, the Bible says, “For it is **God which worketh in you...**”
9. Is God working in you? The word translated “worketh” (2:13) is the Greek word *energeo*, from whence we get our English word “energy.” It is God’s divine energy working in us and through us.
10. What did our Lord say before His ascension into heaven? “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you...” (Acts 1:8).
11. The Holy Spirit is working in Christians that are surrendered to Him. Is the Word of God working in you? First Thessalonians 2:13 says the word of God effectually worketh in us that believe.
12. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God. The power of God is released in us through the Word of God.
13. Therefore, some Christians are weak and worldly because they are not reading their Bibles on a daily basis.
14. Another way God works in us is through prayer. And yet many Christians neglect to pray and they skip prayer meeting week after week.
15. We are to work out our own salvation “with fear and trembling” (2:12). “Fear and trembling” is the opposite of pride and complacency. Fear and trembling suggest humility, dependence upon the grace of God, and a holy zeal for God.

II. THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

1. Not only do we need the right zeal, we must have the right attitude. We are to “do all things without murmurings and disputings” (Phil. 2:14).

2. Sometimes people murmur when you ask them to do something in the church. But it is a great privilege to serve God. It is a privilege to serve as an usher; it is a privilege to serve as a Sunday School teacher; it is a privilege to serve God in whatever ministry He places us.
3. We must be careful not to murmur or complain. We must make sure we have the right attitude. When we read about the children of Israel in the wilderness in the book of Exodus and the book of Numbers, we see that they were always murmuring. And so God had no choice but to judge them. And God judges churches the same way.
4. Before I pointed out that the word “worketh” in Phil. 2:13 is literally “energizes.” But do you know that while God is energizing His children and working in them, Satan is also energizing his children and working in them?
5. Ephesians 2:2 says the devil “worketh in the children of disobedience.” This is the same word – *energeo*.
6. When we give in to murmuring and complaining and disputing, we are doing the devil’s work and God cannot bless us.
7. God’s standard is complete obedience to His commands, complete submission to His will, and complete confidence in His provision.
8. If we get this right, then we will develop the right attitude and God can use us. Murmuring, complaining, and grumbling indicate a heart that is not right with God.

III. THE RIGHT TESTIMONY (2:15, 16)

1. We have already spent quite a bit of time on the importance of the right zeal, and having the right attitude, let me say a few words about the importance of maintaining the right testimony.
2. The Bible says we are to be “blameless and harmless...” (2:15). This means sincere; this means without deceit. This means no charge can be sustained against us. This means if someone falsely accuses you, even an unsaved acquaintance can object and say: “That cannot be. I know him (her).”
3. Beloved, we are “in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation (or “generation,” cf. Luke 9:41, which says: “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you?”)” (2:15). We need to let our light shine.
4. Our country is descending into gross sin and heathen darkness. Our generation is crooked and perverted, twisted and depraved. Something has happened to our great country, something horribly wicked and Satanic.

5. Therefore, our light should shine even brighter! The darker the night, the brighter the light! Philippians 2:15 says we are to “shine as lights in the world.”
6. Jesus said in John 8:12 and 9:5, “I am the Light of the world.”
7. But He also said to His disciples in Matthew 5:14, “Ye are the light of the world.”
8. The idea is that we are light reflectors. To reflect the True Light, we must stay close to the Light.
9. Our Lord said in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”
10. Having the right testimony means being a faithful witness for Jesus Christ. We are to be “Holding forth the word of life” (2:16).
11. Someday we will stand before the Lord and give an account. Paul refers to this as “the day of Christ” (2:16; cf. 1:6, 10). Paul did not want to “run in vain” or “labor in vain” (2:16). He wanted to rejoice, knowing he had the right zeal, the right attitude, and the right testimony. What about us?

CONCLUSION:

1. The ancient scholar Strabo, who lived in the first century before Christ, was a Roman who wrote in Greek (the classical language of that day). He wrote that the Romans owned silver mines in Spain and were “working out” (same Greek word used in Phil. 2:12) of those mines, i.e. they were getting the utmost value out of them.
2. They already owned the mines, but now they were working out of them, i.e. making the most of them. That is the idea here in Philippians 2:12b.
3. If you are born again, you already have salvation. But we must work it out “with fear and trembling.”