

## Working Out Your Own Salvation

As the year whizzes past I am constantly reflecting on how much the body of Christ has to accomplish before the great day of His coming. One thing we know for sure, HE is coming and the sign of the times is definitely pointing us in that direction. Another thing we know for sure is we have much to do.

What's holding us back? Good question but I think I have some insight into that very question. In order to answer that question I want to use a scripture in Philippians to help me. Look at Philippians 2:12b-13; “. . . *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*”

The context established is one of encouraging or directing the people to adopt the mind of Christ by being kindly affectionate toward one another, like minded, looking out for the interests of others over and above our own interests. Letting nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind letting each esteem others better than oneself. In other words, be united as a single body working together for the good of the body and the Kingdom of God rather than for our own selfish interests or always driven by the hurts and problems of our lives. Therefore, “*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*”

Just what does it mean to work out your own salvation? Let's look at a few things to help us. First, what is our salvation? Isn't it our connection with God? Being found complete in Him? Being found in His peace? Of course it is. The Word teaches us it is everything that it takes to make one whole and complete. I believe this is also some of what the Holy Spirit was referring to when He said; “*for it is God who works in you both to **will and to do for His good pleasure.***” To work our own salvation with fear and trembling would be the personal acts or interactions necessary to keep us from being disconnected from God, or out of His peace, or not found complete in Him for some reason.

Let's look at a few of the possible difficulties we all have which require us to “work out our own salvation”.

**1. Comfort** — Why would comfort be something we would have to deal with in order to keep us connected to God? Because comfort brings us into apathy. Apathy is a spiritual killer. Being apathetic means you have lost connection and no longer have any feelings one way or another. Apathy according to Webster is: “1. lack of emotion 2. lack of interest; listless condition; unconcern; indifference.” Revelation 3:15-16 shows us God's attitude toward this indifferent feeling called apathy. “*I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, **I will vomit you out of My mouth.***” Hopefully you can see this is not the position to be in. This is not healthy and would definitely interfere with your salvation plans. Therefore, work out this apathy feeling with God and do not let it settle on you.

**2. Anger** — The Lord teaches us to not sin in our anger and do not let the sun go down on our anger. It is unhealthy and causes many to walk away from God. The first thing to understand is that anger is not a sin but the way we respond to our anger can be sinful. For instance, if you go off in a rage and are out of control, that is damaging and would be sinful. What if you can't control it? That is where you need to understand what it means to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Or what if you just stuff your anger and refuse to deal

with it? That also is damaging and can cause you much trouble. There are proper ways to deal with our anger and if anger is causing you trouble you need to find out the proper way for you to deal with it. That's working out your salvation with fear and trembling. If you stuff your anger and call them "hurt feelings" you are lying to yourself and need to learn how to speak the truth concerning these feelings. If you blow up in a rage because you can't control your anger you need to get to the root of the problem and find out what is hurting you or why you are controlled by fear and allow the Lord to set you free. All of which are the steps to working out your own salvation with fear and trembling to the purpose and pleasure of God who works in you.

**3. Perfectionism** — What the world needs is more perfectionism you may be thinking. Well, perfectionism is actually the ability to see something wrong with everything. No, we don't need more perfectionism, we need more effort toward excellence by giving each other room to improve without cutting each other down. Just because your idea of perfection is not measured up to is no sign you are right while everyone else is wrong. Many people are driven to perfection and they are miserable because there is no way they can measure up themselves. Therefore, they make everyone around them miserable by telling everyone how imperfect they are, or where they made their last mistake or about others in their life that are also less than perfect. Actually they are working with the fault finder Satan and causing much unrest in the body of Christ, the work place, school or wherever their circle of influence happens to be. Remember, the only one to ever live on this earth in perfection was crucified and you or I certainly don't measure up to that. Let's give ourselves and others room to grow by not being so critical. Another place to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

These are just three of the millions of difficulties each of us face that must be worked out if we are ever going to grow toward the maturity and the peace Jesus promised. From here we could talk about all the phobias, fears, anxieties, human compulsions, addictive behaviors, rude behaviors, manipulative behaviors and on and on we could go into a book that would be so large no one would read it. I hope you get the point of what Philippians 2:12-13 is talking about. If you don't see it yet you should probably come in and visit with us. However, assuming you get the picture, that leads us to the point of **HOW** do we do this.

To help us understand "**HOW**" it is important to understand the major points of verse 13; "*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*"

**Point #1. It is God who works in you.** We are not working out our salvation alone. We do not have to wrestle these things through by applying a great deal of our own efforts. We don't have to clench our fists, bite our lower lip, hunker down and strain for all we're worth. We don't have to hang on until Jesus comes or we go home to be with Him. It's not for the sweet by-n-by. It's for the right now everyday life. Remember, God has called us to a life of rest (Hebrews 4) and He desperately does not want us to miss it. Please don't forget, He is in you to comfort, counsel, lead, teach, guide and heal not to condemn and criticize. We do enough of that on our own and it leads us nowhere but down. Please remember: "for it is **God** who works in you . . . ."

**Point #2.** He desires to help you accomplish **His will and good pleasure.** What is His will and good pleasure you ask? Let's look at just a couple indicators of what His pleasure is. First John 14:27 and 16:33 tells us His desire and His will for us is to live in perfect peace— No inner turmoil, stress and pressure. The book of Hebrews teaches us He desires for us to live at rest. Jesus' example of being able to sleep in the back of the boat as the boat was being buffeted by a storm is a picture of this inner peace and rest. Jesus' prayer in John 17 was that we would all live in total unity. That means no arguments, strife, backbiting, or stress in our relationships. The only commandment we have to follow is to love one another as He loved us (John 13:34). Oh

yea, plus to love our enemy and pray for those who spitefully use and hurt us (Luke 6:27-36). Plus, we are to hear the Spirit of God and be led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14), doing what Jesus did while He was on this earth (John 14:12). Do not judge one another lest we be judged (Luke 37) and one more thing worth mentioning is take the log out of our eye so we can see clearly to help our brother take the speck out of his eye (Luke 6:42).

I am not mentioning all these things in order to overwhelm you but to show you all Jesus really wants us to do is to love and take care of each other, yet, something keeps us from even being able to consider one another let alone love and take care of one another. This is and these are the reasons why Jesus desires us to “work out our own salvation” with fear and trembling recognizing it is Him who works in us for His pleasure. All these things are for His pleasure.

So How do we do this? Just like Jesus did while He was on the earth. Look at Hebrews 5 with me for a minute. *“who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,”* (Heb. 5:7) is another way of saying: **“Jesus worked out His own salvation with fear and trembling for it was God who worked in Him to will and to do His Father’s pleasure.”** (Philippians 2:12 my rendition)

When Jesus was on this earth He too was tempted, tried and tested as we are yet, the Bible says He was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Meaning He didn’t fail even once because He knew how to stay strong and stay connected to His Father. **This** is working out your salvation— Saving yourself from death or spiritual disconnection or spiritual separation from God our Father. How did He do it? Simple. He **talked** to His Heavenly Father and our Heavenly Father. **He talked!** He always told His Father how He felt. When Jesus sensed fear, pride, worry, inner turmoil, a judgmental attitude, desire to quit, or all the other issues that cause us to quit or respond negatively He would separate Himself from the crowd, His job, His friends and family and go talk to His Father. Some people have a hard time believing Jesus felt these emotions but the Word tells us He did. *“. . .but was in all points tempted as were, yet without sin.”* (Heb. 4:15b) He had to endure the same trials we do in order to become qualified to die for us (Hebrews 5:8, 9).

In John 14:27 Jesus invited us to live in perfect peace with Him and then in verse 30 He said something quite surprising that most people miss. Speaking to His disciples He said; *“I will no longer talk with you for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.”* Why would He say “he has nothing in Me.”? What can the Devil (The god of this world.) put in us. Or better yet, what could he put in Jesus? The answer is quite simple if you think about it . . . he can only influence us with lies. If we ever misinterpret an experience, we believe a lie. Jesus had many opportunities to misinterpret His experiences but His connection to His Father kept Him from receiving anything the enemy had to offer and therefore Jesus was able to say; *“. . .he has nothing in Me.”*

As a matter of fact look through John 15, 16 and watch what Jesus said in John 16:33: *“These things I have spoke to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* There it is again you see, peace, as long as we remain IN HIM. Jesus remained IN HIS FATHER by telling Him everything He felt was wrong or going wrong. He heard back from His Father and not only that He **spoke back** what His Father told Him. How do I know? The Bible tells me so—look at Mark 14:35 in the Garden of Gethsemane: *“He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.”* He was crying out to His Heavenly Father what He was feeling. GO on to verse 36: *“And He said, Abba Father, all things are possible for You. . .”* He repeated

His Father's encouragement to Him. "*Take this cup away from Me;*" Again He was crying out how He felt. But then look at the remainder of verse 36; ". . . *Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.*" He repeated the Father's words back to Him. He had to do this three times before He was ready for the cross but thanks be to God He did do the Father's Will!!

This is working out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Jesus was in essence working out not only His own salvation but the salvation for the entire world for all who would believe. What a burden! What a Savior! What a Father!

God wants to hear from you and exactly how you feel. Only He can take away the pain of life and make joy return in the morning. Only He can make you glad to be alive when all the world seems to be crumbling down around you. Only He can heal the broken hearted and comfort them that are bruised. He can only do that as we go to Him working out our own salvation with fear and trembling. We will go when we realize His pleasure and will is our peace.

Go to Him today and allow Him to help you find that peace you are searching for. If you have trouble getting the release and healing you are searching for don't be afraid to come see us. We would love to help you. Jesus is waiting for you to call.

Love in Christ Jesus,

Pastor Larry