**Work Out Your Own Salvation**

*Philippians 2:12-18*

**Introduction**

1. The Philippians were called to possess an attitude of humble service among each other to promote unity within the congregation – **Philippians 2:2-4**
2. Christ is given as the ultimate example of this humble disposition of service toward others, and God – **Philippians 2:5-11**
3. In Christ’s first advent in which He humbled Himself to manhood and servanthood:
   1. He acknowledged His own **responsibility**, and pursued it with diligence – **John 4:34**
   2. He considered the **reliability** of His Father, and leaned on Him fully – **John 5:19-20. (Relied on the will of the Father, which was also His own – only reliability for carrying out His mission.)**
   3. He understood the call to **irreproachability**, and let His light shine – **John 9:5**
   4. He recognized the **rejoice-ability** of His relationship with His Father, and by it endured the most grueling hour of trial – **Hebrews 12:2**
4. ***“Therefore”*** (**Philippians 2:12**) – After Paul called them to unity in humble service of each other, giving Christ as the supreme example, he extended the example of Jesus in application to the Philippians’ call to their own humble obedience to God.
5. This obedience, like their attitude toward one another, was to mirror that of Christ.
6. Responsibility **(v. 12)**
7. The common view that the onus of salvation is completely on God is exploded by this verse.
   1. Many, then, grapple with texts like this one and end up with a tortured explanation.
   2. “Then he exhorts them to work out their own salvation. Let us be clear first of all as to what this exhortation does not mean. It does not mean to work for one's salvation, and for two reasons; first, Paul was writing to those who were already saved, and second, salvation is not a work of man for God, but a work of God for man, a work that was accomplished at the Cross.” (Wuest Word Studies, Philippians 2:12)
   3. “Phil. 2:12, where ‘your own salvation’ refers especially to freedom from strife and vainglory” (VINE, commenting on “work out,” katergazomai)
   4. “Paul has just spoken out sharply against Christians looking out for their own individual personal interests (2:4). Hence, it is highly unlikely that he here now reverses himself by commanding them to focus on their own individual salvation.” (Hawthorne, 98) – suggests “salvation” refers to “spiritual health” – “work out your own” referring to “corporate action, to cooperative effort in the common life together as a community” (ibid.)
   5. “For Paul, salvation is by divine grace alone, and thus is God’s work alone. Christians have no contribution to make to salvation such that their failure to do so would jeopardize the final outcome. The command, ‘Work out your salvation with ‘fear and trembling’’ (Phil 2:12) refers to the active role of believers in sanctification.” (“Apostasy, Falling Away, Perseverance,” InterVarsity Press, “Dictionary of Paul and His Letters,” Gundry-Volf, J.M.)
      1. Making salvation and sanctification independent of one another, which the Bible does not do – **cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:13**
8. Paul’s Command Suggests Individual Responsibility for Salvation from Beginning to End
   1. ***“work out”*** – “the tense of the verb indicates that Paul has in mind continuous, sustained, strenuous effort: ‘Continue to work out.’” (Hendriksen)
      1. ***“as you have always obeyed”***
      2. Continue to obey – continue to work out…
   2. ***“in my presence”*** – initially:
      1. Lydia – **Acts 16:15, 40** – initial obedience to gospel, aid of apostle.
      2. Jailer – **Acts 16:33-34** – initial obedience to gospel, aid of apostle.
   3. ***“now much more in my absence”*** – continually:
      1. Is their salvation final, or must they continue to work toward it by obedient faith?
      2. ***“work out”*** – *katergazomai* – to work fully, i.e. accomplish (STRONG)
         1. Present tense. (not aorist – as having already been accomplished)
      3. **(v. 16)** – how might Paul’s work have been in vain? – **Galatians 4:10-11; 5:4** – by falling from grace in disobedient unbelief.
   4. ***“with fear and trembling”*** – as it pertains to the gravity of responsibility, and understanding of consequences in failing.
      1. **2 Corinthians 7:13, 15** – Corinthians reception of Titus who was sent to know of the condition of the church.
      2. **Ephesians 6:5** – Bondservants’ obedience to masters as to the Lord.
      3. We know God is a consuming fire – **Hebrews 12:28-29**
   5. Salvation is an individual’s responsibility – **Ezekiel 18:20, 31-32**
9. Reliability **(v. 13)**
10. A Caveat
    1. **Matthew 19:26** – impossible with men, but possible with God.
    2. **John 15:5** – without Christ we can do nothing. We must abide in Him.
    3. **John 6:68; Acts 4:12; Philippians 2:9-11** – The only true reliability in salvation is with God.
       1. Exclusive source – no other option, but of infinite dependability.
       2. Will not end in disappointment – **Romans 9:33**
11. God Works in You
    1. As you work out, ***“God…works in you”*** – present active.
       1. **Philippians 1:6** – He began it and will complete it.
       2. The fashion or medium through which He works in us does not change from beginning to end.
    2. How does He work in you?
       1. Miraculous operation of the HS? – From erroneous view of man’s nature, total depravity, and even the nature of scripture.
       2. Lydia – **Acts 16:10, 13-15** – gospel preached, heard, heart opened, obeyed, faithful.
          1. **Opened her heart?** – Miraculous means comes from a false presupposition of man’s incapacity to understand God’s word.
          2. **Heart = Intellect, Will, Emotions** – to which God’s word appeals.
          3. **Cf. Acts 17:2-4** – reasoned, explained, demonstrated, persuaded = what happened with Lydia.
       3. Jailer – **Acts 16:30-34** – spoke word, believed, baptized, having believed.
       4. HE WORKS IN US THROUGH HIS WORD – **1 Thessalonians 2:13; Psalm 119:11**
    3. To will and to do:
       1. To will (incentive)
          1. Fear of judgment – **Philippians 2:12** (fear and trembling)
          2. Desire for a better life – **1 Timothy 4:8**
          3. Compelling love of Christ – **2 Corinthians 5:14-15**
          4. Desire to be transformed into Christ’s image – **1 John 3:2-3**
          5. Desire for heaven – **Philippians 3:12-14, 20-21**
       2. To do (instruction)
          1. Not according to the flesh, but the Spirit – **Galatians 5:16-26**
          2. Thoroughly equips for every good work – **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
12. Irreproachability **(vv. 14-16)**
13. The Aim of Our Work and God’s Work in Us
    1. **(v. 15)** – ***“that”*** – *hina* – in order that.
       1. ***“blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach” (NASB)***
       2. ***“blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish” (ESV)***
       3. Blameless/above reproach – judgment of God and others (**cf. 1 Peter 3:16**)
       4. Innocent – internal purity.
       5. Children of God – identity with God – not nominal, but actual, and practical.
    2. ***“crooked and perverse generation”*** – **cf. Acts 2:40 –** be saved from it!
       1. Not to maintain status as before, but be different – changed – **1 Peter 1:13-16** – no longer conformed to lusts, but holy.
       2. **John 17:14-19** – in world, not of world, set apart by truth – practice.
    3. **(v. 16)** – if not, then Paul’s work is in vain – **cf. Jude 5** – saved to be destroyed?
14. The Hindrance
    1. **(v. 14)** – as you work out your salvation – no complaining or disputing.
       1. Against whom? – God works in you **(v. 13)** – against God.
       2. As Israel – **1 Corinthians 10:10-11** – complained, and destroyed.
    2. Complaint and dispute in response to God’s word hinders it from success – **James 1:19-20** – not produce God’s righteousness (such comes from submissive faith to His word).
15. The Method to Success
    1. ***“among whom you shine as lights sin the world” (“appear,” NASB***) – **John 3:21; Matthew 5:14-16** – come to light, shine, overt, not hidden, apparent, contrast.
       1. Reflective – **2 Corinthians 4:4, 6 (3:18** – transformed into same image of glory).
       2. I.e. the word shining in you.
    2. **(v. 16)** – holding fast the word.
16. Rejoice-ability **(vv. 17-18)**
17. The Result of Faithfulness
    1. ***“sacrifice and service of your faith”*** – As they work out their salvation, allow God to work in them, live irreproachable in the world.
    2. **Philippians 1:5, 7, 27-30** – they are sharing in the gospel – defense and confirmation – and suffering with Paul. (more than simply through their financial support of him.)
    3. Rejoice in that – **Philippians 3:1; 4:4** – ***“in the Lord”*** (sphere – as they are in Christ, and labor in Him)
    4. Joy and peace are in believing – **Romans 15:13**
18. A Joy Beyond Corruption
    1. **Philippians 4:4** – always. Despite any outer negative circumstances.
       1. **Philippians 1:18** – rejoice despite ill-will of others.
       2. **Philippians 1:21; 2:17** – rejoice in the face of death (poured out).
    2. Regardless of what happens, we cannot be separated from the love off Christ – **Romans 8:35-39** – such is a recipe for joy.

**Conclusion**

1. We have a responsibility for our own salvation, but have the reliability of God who works in us toward that end.
2. We must understand we are called to an irreproachable life in Christ, but this is not a call to dread, but a call which affords us great rejoice-ability.
3. May we strive to imitate the example of Christ Who fulfilled His responsibility in reliance on God’s will, lived above the reproach of sin, and saw His joy fulfilled in victory.