

**GOD AT WORK IN YOU**  
*The Sanctifying Work in Believers*  
**Philippians 2:12-13**

From the earliest days of the church, the relationship between the *power of God* and the *responsibility of believers* in living the Christian life has been debated. Is the Christian life essentially a matter of *passive trust* or of *active obedience*? Is it *all God's doing* or *all the believer's doing*? Scripture shows that it's *a combination of both*. God *works*...man *responds* and *obeys*.

In this passage, Paul presents the *appropriate resolution* between the *believer's role* and *God's role* in *sanctification*. He makes no effort to *rationalize* the *two roles*. He just *states both truths* saying in effect that on the one hand... *sanctification is the believer's responsibility*...and on the other hand...*it's entirely God's work*.

**I. THE BELIEVER'S RELATIONSHIP: (vs. 12a)**

**So then, my beloved (vs. 12 a)...**

**So then**...connects these verses with what immediately precedes them. The fact that Christ *obeyed* the Father and *carried out* His *perfect, purposed, and predetermined* plan even to *death on the cross* (vs. 8). Paul is now telling the **Philippian** Christians that they needed to *do the same*...to *obey*...to follow his instructions which were drawn from Christ's example. The essence of living the Christian life is being *obedient* like Christ.

*"...By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."*

~I John 2:5b-6

Paul's *exhortation* was *tempered* with *love* and *grace*... but was *direct* and *pointed*. That's why he called them **my beloved**...*my dear friends*.

**My beloved**...This *tender expression* was doubtlessly a reminder to them of the *experiences* they shared with **Paul** and **Silas** when they *first came to Christ* and established their *church* (**Acts 16:19-40**). These were unmistakably words of *comfort* and *encouragement*.

**II. THE BELIEVER'S ROLE: (vs 12b) *In sanctification.***

**Just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling (vs. 12b)...**

Remember what I've tried to teach you through the years... *When God speaks...what you do next shows what you truly (actually) believe about God*. Your *obedience* will always *speak louder* than your *words*.

**Just as you have always obeyed**...Understand the importance of *obedience*.

**Obedied**...a *compound word* composed of the *preposition hupo* and the *verb akouo*...from which the English word *acoustics* is derived. It has the basic meaning of *placing oneself under what has been heard*...and then *obeying*.

The response to *true teaching* is *obedience*...especially when it occurs when one *is not present*. I.e. A parent teaches a child. How the child obeys when the parent isn't around shows the *true obedience* of that child. The same is true with **Paul** here.

When **Paul** was with them, they *followed his instructions willingly* and *quickly*. He reminded them of this before he then asked them to *do the same at the present time*...even though he was far from them (**Philippians 1:27**).

Not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence...Understand the importance of *taking personal responsibility*. Because we believers still fight our *flesh nature*...our *sin nature*...we are inclined to be *self-justifying, blaming our situation* on our *circumstances*, or even *blaming other people* for our *problems* and *failures*. But here, Paul commends the **Philippians** for their *faithful pattern of obedience* to Christ while they were in his **presence**. But he goes on to say that they were *just as obligated to obey* during his **absence**...even **more** so now that he isn't with them.

Paul is basically *repeating an admonition* that he had made earlier.

*“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”*

~Philippians 1:27

The special request Paul had for them in view of *the example of Christ* is stated *very compellingly*...that is, to *continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling*.

Paul doesn't want to be their *spiritual crutch*. He's saying *all that God has given him, He has given to them*. The *same Lord Jesus Christ* who *dwells* in Paul is the *same Lord Jesus Christ* who *dwells* in the **Philippians**. What Paul *has*...they *have*. What Paul *can be* by the grace of God...they *can be* by the grace of God. **Work out your own salvation**. And the *same is true today*.

**Work out your salvation**...It's understood that this exhortation relates to the *personal salvation* of the *saints* at **Philippi**...**your own salvation**.

**Work out**...Gk. *katergazomai*, a **present middle imperative**...indicates a *present command* that has *continuous action*...which indicates *a command that has a continuing emphasis*. The idea is to *put into practice in their daily living that which God had already worked in them through the Holy Spirit*.

Paul is exhorting them to *keep on working to completion* *...to make a continued, sustained effort* until the day that they stand before God.

Salvation has *three dimensions*: *past, present, and future*. We *have been saved* (justification)...we *are being saved* (sanctification)...we *will be saved* (glorification).

It needs to be noted...they were *not told to work for* their *salvation*...but *to work out their salvation*...the *salvation* that God had already *given them*. His *free gift* of *eternal life*.

It's a picture of *working in a mine*...*working to dig out all the valuable minerals*.

- You have to *go deep*. Go *deep into the Word*...grow *deep roots of faith*. You can't be *superficial*.
- Sometimes it gets *dirty* and *ugly* (like dealing with sin in our lives). *Getting forgiveness*...*giving forgiveness*...even *forgiving yourself*. *Prayer*...how it *refines* you.
- The minerals mined are *precious, valuable, and useful*.

**Your**...has an emphatic meaning of *“your own.”*

**Your salvation**...The principle of **working out salvation** has *two aspects*. The *first* pertains to *personal conduct*. The *second* is *perseverance*.

**The first**...*personal conduct*...*living faithfully and obedient every day*...imitating Christ...be Christ-like. *Holiness*...*righteousness*...*being steadfast*...

The second...perseverance...*being faithful and obedient to the end...to finish well.*

With **fear and trembling**...emphasizes the need to have *complete trust* in God...not in themselves.

**Fear**...Gk. *phobos*...it can be used in *two different ways*. It describes *both...fright or terror...or a reverent sense of awe*. In reality, when we **fear** God...it's *both*.

Such **fear** involves a *sensitive conscience*...being constantly aware of the *deceitfulness of one's heart*. It's a **fear** that seeks to *avoid anything* that would *offend* and *dishonor* God. Such **fear** *protects* against *temptation* and *sin* and gives *motivation* for *obedient, righteous living*.

**Trembling**...Gk. *tromos*, refers to *shaking*. The **English** word *tremor* is derived from it. *Shaking* in one's boots!

Both of these are proper reactions to the *awareness of one's own spiritual weakness* and the *power of temptation*.

*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”*  
~Proverbs 9:10

### III. GOD'S ROLE: (vs. 13) *In sanctification.*

For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (vs. 13)...

For it is God who is at work in you...The *omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent*, and *eternal* Creator and Sustainer of the universe *loves* His children with an *everlasting love* and *kindness*...and is *personally* at work in us *transforming* us into His *image* and *likeness*.

*“We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same*

*image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”*

~II Corinthians 3:18

**Both to will and to work**...This isn't referring to God's **will** and **work**...but that of the *believers*. **Paul** told the **Philippian** saints that God had been *working in them* so that they would have the **will** to do *what is right before God*. This **will** to do *what is right before God* must *precede* any *effective work* that is done. It's this **work** that's based on the **will** of the believer to do what is *right before God* that *accomplishes* His **good purpose**...and ultimately to the *glory of God*.

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”*

~Ephesians 2:10

**Work**...means *to energize, enable, or empower*. God is at work through His *obedient believers* to do *His work*...to accomplish His *purpose*.

For His good pleasure...Gk. *eudokias*, which *expresses God's great enjoyment and satisfaction*.

### LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- As a believer, we are responsible to live our lives in a manner that is consistent with God's gift of **ETERNAL LIFE**...as we work out our **SALVATION**.
- A godly fear protects the believer from **TEMPTATION** and **SIN**...and seeks to avoid anything that would **OFFEND** and **DISHONOR** God.
- The believer's **SUPREME PURPOSE** is to obey, worship, and glorify God...and fulfilling that purpose brings **PLEASURE** to Him.