

**Subject: God's Work of Sanctification**

**Scripture: Philippians 2:12-13**

Salvation is God's work from start to finish.

*Philippians 1:6* Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Salvation has three stages:

1) God's beginning work is JUSTIFICATION

We are saved from the penalty of sin (a one-time event)

2) God's ongoing work is SANCTIFICATION

We are saved from the power of sin (a lifelong process)

3) God's final work is GLORIFICATION

We are saved from the presence and possibility of sin (a one-time event)

Too often we only focus on stage one and stage three, and we neglect stage two. And yet, stage two is where we live our whole Christian life. It is the time after our conversion until the time we enter heaven.

If God wanted to He could take us to heaven the moment we are saved, but that's not what He does. He works in our life to develop godly character and enables us to serve Him.

## **1. THE BELIEVER'S ROLE IN SANCTIFICATION (vs. 12)**

Our role is stated in these words: "Work out your own salvation." The Bible is clear that salvation is not earned by good works. Paul does not say *work for* your salvation. He does not say *work at* your salvation. He does not say *work up* your salvation, as if something is lacking and we need to help God finish what He started. The verb "work out" means to work out something to completion or a conclusion, just like when we "work out" a math problem or when someone is in a mine working out the gold or silver. God works our salvation in, and it is our responsibility to work it out.

A. Every believer has an active (not passive) role

We don't just "let go and let God," as some people teach. Paul tells believers to work out our salvation. That is our responsibility. There is a balance between God's sovereignty and our responsibility in salvation.

B. Every believer has a privileged role

We are the "beloved," because God loves us in a special way. We are responsible to work out "our own salvation," the gift that God has graciously given to us.

C. Every believer has an obedient role

The Philippians were exactly what Christians are called to be. They always obeyed whether Paul was with them or not.

D. Every believer has a lifelong role

The verb “work out” is a present tense, which means ongoing action. As long as we are in this body, it will be our responsibility to work out our salvation.

E. Every believer has a serious role

We are called to work out our own salvation “with fear and trembling.” This is a reminder of our solemn duty under God. We do this in the fear of God. All of our Christian life is to be lived in the fear of God. This doesn’t mean that we are afraid that God will take away our salvation or that He will punish us in Hell if we fall short of His will. It does mean that we understand the grace that God has given us, the price He paid to save us, and the honor He deserves for saving us. It is not a fear that we might somehow lose salvation, but a concern that we might misuse our salvation. The fear of God is a guiding principle for believers.

**Jeremiah 32:39-40**<sup>39</sup> *And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:*<sup>40</sup> *And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*

**Ecclesiastes 12:13** *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*

**Acts 9:31** *Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*

**2 Corinthians 7:1** *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

**Colossians 3:22** *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.*

**Hebrews 12:28** *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*

**1 Peter 1:17** *And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*

## **2. GOD’S ROLE IN SANCTIFICATION (vs. 13)**

We are responsible for working out our salvation because God is working in us to do this very thing. We can only work it out because He is working it in. The word for work is *energeo*,

from which we get our words “energy” and “energize.” There are two primary ways that God works in us: to will and to do of His good pleasure.

A. God works in us to desire His will

God energizes our desires so that we want to do His will. Salvation is a matter of the heart and will. It changes the way we think and make choices. If we are saved God changes our wants so they line up with His. It changes the way we pray: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

B. God works in us to do His will

God not only energizes our desires, but He gives us the ability to do His will. Why do people fail to do God’s will? Two reasons: they don’t want to do it and they’re not able. Salvation takes care of both problems. God gives us the desire and the ability. We refer to these as spiritual gifts. Knowing what the Bible says about our role and God’s role in sanctification, let’s apply this truth.

**APPLYING THIS MESSAGE**

1) Are you living as a responsible believer?

Do you seek to obey the Lord in all things? Are you working out your salvation in the fear of God?

2) Are you depending on God to give you the desire and ability to live for Him?

Are you relying on His strength or your own? Are you burned out or fired up?

3) If you have no desire to do God’s will or obey Him, then you’re probably not saved.

If that’s the case with you, then you must repent of your sin and trust Christ as Lord and Savior.