

Philippians 6 - A Working Salvation

1. We don't work *for* our salvation.

As we move through Paul's letter to the Philippians, we come to a passage that has sometimes been misunderstood to suggest that we have to do good works or keep commandments to be saved.

Phil 2:12-13 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.
13For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

Paul does indeed talk about obedience and work and then uses the word salvation in the same sentence. If someone is half paying attention they might conclude that one must do good works to obtain salvation. We always have to make sure to look at *all* the words. Many times the little words, especially, make all the difference. We have to let Scripture interpret Scripture.

Rom 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Rom 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Gal 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

John 6:28-29 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?
29Jesus answered and said unto

them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

If this Scripture sounds, at a glance, like it is talking about earning one's salvation, a good Bible student will right away detect that something is amiss. A good Bible student will notice something is out of kilter, but the world is full of people who are not good students.

7000 Protestant youth from many denominations were asked whether they agreed with the following statements:

"The way to be accepted by God is to try sincerely to live a good life. — More than 60% agreed

"God is satisfied if a person lives the best life he can." — Almost 70% agreed

"The main emphasis of the gospel is on God's rules for right living." — More than half agreed.

— Source unknown

People will go to extreme lengths to try to earn their salvation.

India's Ritual Bathing in the River

36,000 Sadhus, or Hindu holy men, were part of the estimated crowd of 40 million attending the two month Kumbh Mela festival in India in the spring of '92. A missionary described the purpose of ritual bathing in the river,

"They come for forgiveness of sins and salvation. Some thousands come stark naked—some of them rolling on the rough roads for miles, believing the festering sores on their bodies would earn them salvation...Hundreds have kept one arm lifted up for years until the arm gets shriveled with dry gangrene...others have stood on one leg for years, hanging on to a suspended sling while

sleeping...all these are done to appease angry gods."

— Partners, published by Partners International, August, 1992

There is a story told about an instant cake mix that was a big flop. The instructions said all you had to do was add water and bake. The company couldn't understand why it didn't sell—until their research discovered that the buying public felt uneasy about a mix that required only water. Apparently people thought it was too easy. So the company altered the formula and changed the directions to call for adding an egg to the mix in addition to the water. The idea worked and sales jumped dramatically.

That story reminds us of how some people react to the plan of salvation. To them it sounds too easy and simple to be true, even though the Bible says, "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast. (Eph. 2:8-9). They feel that there is something more they must do, something they must add to God's "recipe" for salvation. They think they must perform good works to gain God's favor and earn eternal life. But the Bible is clear—we are saved, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy" (Titus 3:5).

Unlike the cake-mix manufacturer, God has not changed His "formula" to make salvation more marketable. The gospel we proclaim must be free of works, even though it may sound too easy.

— Our Daily Bread, June 2, 1992

But Paul does not say that we should work *for* our salvation. It is that little

word *out* that makes the difference. Compare this to a passage every soul winner should know:

Eph 2:8,9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

9Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Our salvation is not based on work done to compensate, appease, or impress God to let us in to Heaven. Our salvation is based on whether we ask God to forgive us based on the fact that, on the cross, Jesus did all the work necessary to take our judgment on Himself and to make us a spiritually new person, a child of God.

2. We give our salvation a work out.

Paul did not say that we should work *for* our salvation. It is that little word *out* that makes the difference. To work *out* our salvation means something like *giving our salvation a workout*, or, *putting our salvation to work*. Figuratively speaking, when we exercise our *faith*, we receive *salvation*. When we exercise our *salvation* we receive *rewards*. I remember back in Physics class the professor having some fun with us. In *physics*, work is carefully defined as *force* times *distance*. He would point out that when you get up out of bed, the distance you travel to go to work is canceled out by the distance you travel to get back. You might expend a lot of energy and force, but since you end up where you started from, you have traveled zero distance. Zero distance spent equals *zero work*. Let us remember that when we talk about *work* we are referring to that which we produce. Some people put out a lot of effort without ever producing anything. When we put our salvation to work, we should be spiritually productive.

Matt 7:20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Matt 5:15-16 Neither do men

light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Luke 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

I would like to say that what we produce is Christians, but that is at least slightly off. Only the Holy Spirit produces Christians as they respond to Him. What *we* produce is the testimony of a Christian as the lost observe the change that was made in *our* heart. We produce a Gospel testimony as we share it with others around us.

When you join a church you don't convert, find Jesus, get saved. That happens when someone puts their faith in Christ to save them. When you join a church, you join a team. It is interesting that in some workplaces, employees are called "team members." When Jesus used the word *church*, He was using a very specific term that spoke of people joining in the work together.

The Saints are Winning

A pastor was listening to a football game between the Seattle Seahawks and the New Orleans Saints. They were playing in Seattle's Kingdome. The game was already in progress when he tuned in. He heard the announcer say that the

Saints were winning.

The announcer said things like: "The Saints have the team spirit." "The Saints are moving down the field!" "The Saints have enthusiasm." "The Saints have the will to win." "The Saints are winning in the Kingdome."

What the New Orleans Saints were doing that day in the *Kingdome* was what Christian saints should be doing in and for the *Kingdom* ... the Kingdom of God.

The saints of God *should* be winning. The saints of God should be *victorious*, living with *certainty and confidence*, exhibiting *team spirit* and showing *joy* in being part of a *winning team*. Instead of going to church whining and whimpering about our self-centered, self-interests not being met, we need to always be ready to work for Christ. Instead of going to church looking for entertainment and how much we *get out* of the service, we should look to see how much we can *give to* the service. If someone offends us, that is not a signal for us to run away. It is a signal to us that there is some *work* needed.

We should also notice that we are to do this with fear and trembling. *Fear* is a large subject, but in Phil 2:12 it refers to how seriously we should take our responsibility before God.

Phil 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

We don't have to be fearful of where we are going when we die. Jesus Christ has secured that eternally.

John 10:27-30 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal

life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.

29My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand.

30I and *my* Father are one.

What we do want to do is know that we are trusted with a grave responsibility.

2Cor 4:1-2 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

2But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

We should take our work here *very* seriously. There are times for lightness and joy, but when it comes to our mission, we should not confuse that lightness with the seriousness of the mission God has given us.

3. It is *God* who does the work *through* you.

There is one last aspect to take into consideration about the work we produce because of our salvation that should bolster our confidence. *It is not us who actually carries the workload!*

Phil 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

We don't work by our own power.

1Cor 1:26-31 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*:

27But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to

confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29That no flesh should glory in his presence...

31That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Matt 11:28-30 Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and *ye* shall find rest unto your souls.

30For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

1Cor 3:6-10 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

7So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

8Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

9For we are labourers together with God: *ye* are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building.

10According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

We want to take God seriously and be fearful of *mishandling* the mission, but at the same time don't be afraid *to* serve God because He will work *through* you. Get involved in soul winning. Talk to people in church. Be fearful that those

things in your life whether they be sinful, worldly, or foolish will detract from the message of the Gospel. Be fearful that your teammates will have to make up for your slack. Rejoice that God is going to use you as you dig in to His mission and work.

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2. We give our salvation a work out. Matt 7:20,5:15-16, Luke 3:8, Eph 2:10, Phil 2:12, John 10:27-30, 2Cor 4:1-2
3. It is God who does the work through you. Phil 2:13, 1Cor 1:26-31 , Matt 11:28-30, 1Cor 3:6-10