

God is Working in You So You Get to Work!

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[0:00] Philippians chapter 2 beginning in verse 3. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

! Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing.

Taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

[1:14] For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. It's usually not a good practice to read someone else's mail.

But do you realize that's what we have done this morning? Paul, the apostle, has written a letter to a church in Philippi 2,000 years ago, and he's addressed that church with some very personal issues, some problems, even the unity problem that seems to be dealt with more than any other issue in the letter.

And so we're reading their mail. But in another sense, we're reading our own mail, aren't we?

Because Paul wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And the words given to him are the words of God addressed to us.

This letter to the Philippians has found its way by the ordering of God's providence into the canon of Scripture, the collected, inspired writings.

It's part of the Holy Scriptures given to us, the church, meant to teach us, to rebuke us, to correct and train us, to equip us for every good work.

[2:37] So in that sense, we're reading our own mail. God is speaking and has a word to say to us. And in this word, we find everything we need for life and godliness.

Now we've come to the part of the letter where Paul is giving some exhortations, some commands to follow. And he's been calling them and us to live in unity together, to have the attitudes that build unity, namely humility and selflessness.

And in order to drive his point home, he lifts up before us the example of our Lord Jesus in order to shame our pride and self-centeredness as we see him who is God become a man and go to the cross and there suffer all that we might be the better for eternity.

He makes himself poor that we through his poverty might be made rich. Now let that attitude that was in Christ be in you. Well, that's the command Paul's been pressing home here for several verses as he opens the second chapter, what we call the second chapter.

We come today to another command. And it's a much broader command than the command to unity, though it includes that command to unity. So, though we're moving on, the thought of unity is not out of sight in Paul's mind as we come to verse 12 and continue on in this text this morning.

[4:18] And that becomes clear to us in the very first word of our text in verse 12, therefore, and whenever we see a therefore, we must ask what it is therefore.

And this word therefore is a word that has two hands and it reaches back and it lays hold of what has gone before. And with the other hand it reaches forward to what he is now going to say that's new.

And the therefore becomes the connecting link. And so it would say as we move on to this next subject, don't forget what I've just said to you. The therefore holds the two together. So we'll not want to forget this call to unity that Paul has been making as we move on now to verse 12. It will rather be reinforced by the command that he now gives, a broader command. And before we do come to that command, notice this as well, it's given in love. Therefore, my dear friends, my beloved ones. Here's Paul again telling his people that he loves them. [5:31] It's a term of endearment and he's saying, what I have to tell you now, I tell you because I love you and I want the best for you. And so our text this morning is just two verses, verses 12 and 13.

It's really one long sentence and it breaks down easily into three parts. First, the command where he tells us what to do. Then, the manner in which he tells us how to do it. And thirdly, the reason or the incentive where he tells us the why we should do it. So first of all, the command.

What are we to do? In all these words, kids, this long sentence, there's only one imperative. There's only one command. What is it? It is, work out your salvation.

That's the command. Work out your salvation. Now, we need to be careful when we talk about work and salvation. So, listen carefully.

[6:37] Some aspects of salvation are accomplished in a moment. Like the new birth. Regeneration. There you were dead in trespasses and sins.

And the next moment, God made you alive in Christ. Dead the one moment, alive the next. It happened in an instant. Or, the aspect of salvation called justification, whereby we were made right with God.

There we were, one moment, guilty, under God's wrath and condemnation. If we died that moment, we'd go to hell deservedly. And then we trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And instantly, we were united to Christ, which means that all of our sins were put to His account, and all of His righteousness was put to my account, so that I was never more righteous before God than I was at that moment.

I'm not more righteous as to my standing in heaven before God today than I was the moment I trusted Him. It was accomplished in a minute. Our justification, our being made right in the legal courtroom of heaven.

[7:51] No more condemnation for me. I'm in Christ. All of these aspects of salvation are accomplished by God in a moment.

There's nothing more for me to do in working it out. But other aspects of our salvation are a process. They're done over time. Like sanctification.

That's another aspect of this so great salvation. What is sanctification? It's salvation from sin's impact upon my heart and life.

It's bringing our hearts and lives into line with God's revealed will. It's practical holiness. It's being changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

It's taking on His thoughts and attitudes and motivations and actions. And this, too, is all part of that great salvation. But this part of salvation, as you have no doubt found, is not done in an instant.

[8:55] It is not in an instant that you find all those old attitudes and habits to fall off and all new attitudes and habits to suddenly spring forth into existence.

No, this part of salvation is not done by a visit to an altar where we dedicate ourselves to the Lord or rededicate ourselves to the Lord.

It's not one act of surrender a moment in time and then presto, there it is. Finished. Replacing old sinful habits with new holy habits is an ongoing war.

It's not the squirmish of a day or an hour, a battle of a week. It's a lifelong fight to the finish. And what Paul is saying is that in this aspect of your salvation, salvation, this salvation from sin's effect on your heart and life, in this aspect of salvation, you're not a passive spectator.

You are an active participant and very active. There's something for you to do in this aspect of salvation from sin's power in your life.

[10:08] So, work out your salvation. It's a call to action, indeed to unceasing, continual action as the very tense of the verb reveals and our translation reflects.

Continue to work out your salvation. So, what Paul is saying is, beloved, get busy. Get busy.

Get to work. And so, this verse stands and wars against the easy Christianity that is so popular in our day. not only has repentance been removed from the gospel so that the gospel today is just ask Jesus into your heart.

But there's other ways that the Christian life has been watered down to an easy Christianity that's foreign to the scriptures. People seem to think that once you become a Christian, everything should be easy from there on out.

They think that somehow all the work and effort ceases when you become a Christian. Christian. And it affects their attitude. I mean, they've asked Jesus into their hearts.

[11:17] So, for them, the big issue is settled. I'm saved. I'm on my way to heaven. So, now I'm just coasting along. Don't bother me with duties. Don't bother me about obeying commandments.

Don't ask me to work hard at anything in the Christian life. If it doesn't come easy, I'm not interested. If work is involved, I'm out of here.

Now, that's very prevalent in the church of Jesus Christ. But, dear friends, we have not so learned Christ. The Apostle Paul has not so taught us. Rather, work out your salvation, he says to us.

There's no room for laziness in the Christian life. There's no room for that spirit of ease that would just relax. now that I'm a Christian.

Rather, our idolatrous love for ease must be confronted and must be dealt with and denied every step of the way. I'm very thankful that some 10 to 12 young believers here in our church are studying through a book the spiritual disciplines of the Christian life.

[12:32] And they're learning very early in their Christian life that becoming a Christian doesn't mark the end of effort and work. It's rather the beginning.

You're just punching in. You know, when you go in the time, you're punching in. Now it's time to get to work. You've rested upon the work of Christ. And now, he sends you to work.

Get to work, he says. Work out your salvation. Not working for your salvation in order to earn it, but work out that salvation freely given by Jesus Christ.

And there's not a Christian anywhere that does not need to hear this command, get to work. Get to work. Get to work at this business of salvation from sin.

Work it out in every area of your life. Carry this salvation out to its conclusion, out to its end, in every aspect of your life, to the end of your life.

[13:32] And that means we've got to ask ourselves some questions. What is this salvation from sin to look like in my home? Because I'm to work it out there.

Excuse me. Work out your salvation in your marriage, as a husband, as a wife, as a parent, as a child, as a brother, a sister.

If you're a Christian, now work out your salvation there in the home. salvation. What is salvation from sin to look like in my finances, in my job, in my use of time, my use of the Lord's Day?

Work out your salvation in that area. What is salvation from sin to look like in my studies, the way I approach school, in my recreations, sins, in my dating?

Work out your salvation in every aspect of life. You see, there's a word from God to obey in every one of these areas. Now get busy and work out your salvation from sin in all areas of your life.

[14:49] Now don't forget the connecting therefore. So we've got to ask another question, don't we? what does salvation for sin look like in my church, in my relationships with my brothers and sisters?

Oh, it looks like this. You'll all be of the same mind and think the same thing and have the same love and have the same purpose. Now you're to work out your salvation here by being like-minded, by having the same love, by having the same purpose.

You're to roll up your sleeves and get busy at that hard work of unity, of considering others better than yourselves and having an outlook, not for your own interest, but for the interest of your brothers and sisters.

That's hard work. You won't do that without a struggle. You'll find the need for holy sweat if you're to make every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

That's what it means to work out your salvation in your church. So Paul comes and says, get to work. Now before we move on, notice that working out your salvation is parallel with obeying God's word.

[16:10] It's a call to obedience, isn't it? What does it mean to work out your salvation? Well, it means obeying, obeying God. Notice he says, as you have always obeyed, continue to work out

your salvation.

To work out your salvation is to continue to obey even as you have been doing. Now work out that obedient attitude in every area of your life.

So that's the command. And it comes clear to us, it comes rubbing against the grain of our love for ease and the easy Christianity of the day. Work, work, work.

work. Secondly, what's the manner? How am I to work out my salvation? And here Paul says two things. Number one, as one conscious of the all-seeing eye of God.

That's how you're to work out your salvation. Remembering God is present and is watching. Notice how he puts it in verse 12. This is something you are to do not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence.

[17 : 19] Now it used to be in school anyway that when the teacher was in the room, all the rules were kept. I understand that's not always the case today, but it used to be that when she was there, everyone obeyed the rules.

But just let her step out of the room and spit wads were flying and kids were out of their chairs and talking. What made the difference in the behavior of the children?

children, the presence or absence of the teacher. There are some homes, I don't know if we have any here, but that when mom and dad are home, the house rules are obeyed.

But when mom and dad step out for an evening, all sorts of things happen. What makes the difference in the behavior of the children? The presence or absence of the parent.

Some husbands and wives speak to each other with harsh and demeaning words. But when the pastor walks into the home, they speak as pleasing to one another as you could imagine.

[18 : 25] What makes the difference? The presence or absence of the preacher. Now that's what Paul has in mind when he says, work out your salvation.

Not just when I'm there present with you, but now much more when I'm absent. You know, churches can become overly dependent upon their pastors, upon their leaders, and can lean on them in an unhealthy way.

Here's one way you can tell if they're leaning in an unhealthy way upon their leaders. When they change their behavior because of their preacher's presence. Something's wrong.

Seriously wrong. And that's a concern the Apostle Paul has. He struck the concern in verse 27 of chapter 1. He says, so whether I hear about you, whether I come and see you or else just hear about you, what I want to see or hear, whichever it is, is that whatever happens, you live in a manner worthy of the gospel.

But whether I'm there to see it or a way to hear it, it shouldn't make any difference. You all should carry on in a manner worthy of the gospel. And now we see that same concern. He wants them to work out their salvation, not only when he, the great apostle, is present, but now much more when he's absent and he's not there to prod them and he's not there to oversee them.

[19 : 51] And this is the picture we get of this church. They probably weren't arguing with each other to get their way when Paul was visiting, when Paul was there.

But when Paul left, it wasn't long before the sharp words came out and people began to treat each other in a proud way, in a selfish way, seeking their own things with selfish ambition and vain conceit.

And Epaphroditus has now come from Philippi to Rome where Paul's in prison. He's told him about that. Paul, you know, the humility that we once had is given away to pride. And that one shared purpose that we once had is now given away to everybody's own little agenda.

It's not like it once was, Paul, when you were there. Paul says, oh, no, I don't want you working out your salvation just when I'm there. Whether I am present or not is not the important thing.

The important thing is that God is present and you live beneath his eye. Work out your salvation before him because he's going to say in the next verse he's working in you.

[21 : 12] He's right here in you. That's the primary thing. And so, believers, your primary audience must be God himself. Not your parents. Not your pastors.

But God himself. We're working out our salvation for him. We are not performing for men. So that's how we're to work out our salvation.

As one that is conscious of the all-seeing eye of God. Of him who is present. Living in me. Working in me. We live unto him. And you see, when God is our primary audience, the one that we're most concerned about and thinking about, then the lesser authorities in our lives can come and go, but it

won't change our behavior.

So your boss at work can leave the room and you will work just as hard when he is not present as you do when he is present. Because your primary audience is still present.

And when the teacher steps out, you'll behave as you do when she's in. And when your parents step out. When the policeman's nowhere in sight.

[22:20] The taxman's nowhere in sight. Consistency of behavior. Why? Because you're working out your salvation, not unto men, but unto him who is ever present, whose eye is always upon you.

It's Joseph down in Potiphar's house. And his wife says, the master's gone. Come to bed with me. He'll never know. And Joseph shows that he is not his primary audience.

It's not Potiphar, his master. How can I sin against God? He says. How can I do this and sin against God? You see, he lived as one conscious of the all-seeing eye of God.

That's working out your salvation. As the apostle is saying. Not concerned with who's there in terms of men, but with who is there your God.

Now, the other thing that Paul says about how we are to work out our salvation is secondly, in the fear of God. And it's really not unrelated to what we've just said.

[23:25] But now, in the fear of God, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Verse 12.

Now, this is not a slavish fear, a terror of God, that the man who is in his sin and under condemnation and wrath, that he ought to feel when he's in the presence of God.

The kind of terror that Adam and Eve had when they had sinned against God and they were uncovered and turned and ran and hid. That's not the kind of fear here. This is a healthy fear of God like is spoken of throughout the Scriptures.

To live in the fear of the Lord is to stand in awe of Him. We've done studies on the joy of fearing God. It's being aware of the goodness and the greatness of this one in whose presence I live.

And here we can see how closely related it is to what Paul has just said, that we're to live conscious not of whether Paul's present or who else is, but conscious of God's presence.

And when we're aware of God's presence, there's this reflex action of a humble contrition, an awareness of our own weakness and sin that makes us to have this fear, this reverence, this awe, and this trembling before the Almighty.

[24:51] A trembling anxiousness to do what is right is one way that one commentator's translation or explanation. A fear of displeasing so good and so great a God.

I don't want to displease my loving Father in Heaven who gave His Son for me. That's my greatest fear in life, that I would displease Him after all He's done for me.

Fear and trembling. You see how opposed this is to any self-sufficiency and cockiness that would feed a lazy and careless attitude toward the Christian life.

Well, I'm a Christian now, you see. And so I don't need to be all busy about making every effort to do this and that. And we have a lazy Christianity because there's no fear of God before men's eyes. There is this careless spirit within modern Christianity that is itself fearful. Just this week I had a young Christian, a young lady tell me that she was reading in God's Word about the fear of the Lord.

[26:04] And she said, you know, there isn't a whole lot of that in my generation today. Not much fear of God. What does that mean? How would I build that?

How would I guard myself against the spirit that seems to be so prevalent in the church today of no fear of God?

Well, that's what Paul, do you see what Paul's saying? Work out yourself, continue to work out your salvation. How, Paul? In what manner? With fear and trembling.

That is to characterize the way that you work it out in every aspect of your life. Calvin says, this doesn't destroy one's confidence.

It destroys our self-confidence. But Calvin says, distrust of self leads us to lean more confidently upon the mercy of God. It gets our confidence in the right place.

[27:01] I can't trust myself. I tremble in fear to think how I might fall. But I lean heavily upon the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

So that's the way, the manner, the how of working out your salvation. In the fear of God, conscious of his presence, conscious of his eye.

But you've noticed that the Apostle Paul is constantly mixing into the batch motivation. Incentives. Why should we do this, Paul?

Do you have something to move us? We're sluggish. We're like those slugs that just barely move along the ground. And we need something to motivate us, to spur us on.

And so Paul is constantly, in his writings, mixing in motivations. And so we have the reason for working out our salvation. Here it is, the incentive. Why should I continually work out my salvation in fear and trembling?

[28:02] Conscious of God being present because God is working in you. It's verse 13. The whole incentive is verse 13. For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

You work out your salvation because God is busy working in to you. He's working in you. Now, that at once has both a humbling effect upon me and it has an encouraging effect upon me.

I believe the encouragement is the primary thing. So we're going to deal with it first. But I'll come back to the humbling aspect of this verse. But this is said, first of all, for our encouragement.

God is working in me so that I might work out my salvation. In other words, it's not a futile assignment that God has given me. When he says, John, get to work.

Get busy at becoming more holy, becoming more like my son. Get busy starting to esteem others better than yourself. Oh, man, that seems like the Himalayan mountains.

[29:12] How can I do that, Lord? I don't feel anything in me to move me, to consider her better than mine. Is it just an exercise in futility? No. Why not? Because God is the one who's working in you, John.

Oh, there's hope then. There's encouragement. There's comfort to know that these things can be done. I can work out my salvation because God is working in me.

He's the one who's energizing me. Indeed, the very word here, it's He who works in you. The word there for works is the word *energeo* in the Greek, from which we get our word energy.

So, I'm not given an assignment that's way beyond me and then just left to my weakness and inability. Rather, God Himself works in me, energizes me to do all that He's called me to do.

That's what Paul says in Colossians 1.29. To this end, I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me.

[30:24] I work. I labor. I struggle. How? Because I'm such a strong Christian? No, because God is energizing me.

Have you thought about that? The one who's energizing? Have you thought about the one who's working in you? Think who He is.

The one who by His powerful words spoke and all things came into being out of nothing. Let there be light. And there was a sun large enough to dump over a million earths into it.

A sun releasing 11 billion pounds of hydrogen every second. Every second. And yet we're not reduced to ashes.

He hangs it in space exactly where He wants it in relation to the earth. This God is the God who is at work in you. The God who made a way through the Red Sea for His children to pass through.

[31:42] The God who wove you together in your mother's womb. This God is at work in you. Psalm 139 takes us into His workshop, the womb.

And there we see Him at His job, at His work. This God fearfully and wonderfully were made. And He's the workman, you see. He's the one that's at work in you, Christian.

The one who by His power raised our Lord from the dead. Paul prays that we might know more and more of His incomparably great power for us who believe. Do you realize the incomparably great power that's at work in you, believers?

That power is like the working of His mighty strength which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms.

There He is. He's as dead as that roadkill on the road. He's gone. There's no life on Him. No life in Him. And He raises Him from the dead.

[32:42] He brings Him alive. And He lifts Him up to His right hand to the highest place in the whole universe. What kind of power is needed to do that? That's the power that's at work in you.

It's the same God. You've seen signs perhaps. Men at work. You ought to have certain expectations, shouldn't you? I suppose we would not see that sign since it's a gender specific sign.

But it used to be you would read men at work. And you would have certain expectations. Well, if men are working here this road should be smoother next week when I come through. Have you thought about the fact that there in Philippians 2.13 there's a sign posted above you Christian that

says God at work?

God's at work here. What should be our expectation of the changes of the power of the help that will be given to this person?

God is at work here. Do you see the encouragement the incentive for us to make every effort to work work at this thing of salvation from sin in every area of my life?

[33 : 56] There's more encouragement here. What is he doing? He's at work, is he? And me?

That's encouraging. Well, what's he doing? Well, he tells us he's working in you to will and to act according to his good purpose or his good pleasure.

Now, Calvin says that in any action that you do, there are two parts to it. There's first of all the will, the desire to do something. You got out of bed this morning, didn't you?

Well, I know one thing about that. You had a desire to do so. You say, no, I didn't either. It was my mom and she made me get up. Well, there might have been a little prodding, but because you didn't want to suffer the wrath of mom, you wanted to get out of bed, didn't you?

Whatever you do, you always do it because you choose to do it. At the moment, that is the thing that your will chooses. So in any act, there's the willing, the desire to do something.

And then secondly, there's the actual doing of it, the accomplishment, the bringing it forth from the mind and will into reality. You put one foot out of the covers and then the other foot and you got up and you were out of bed.

[35 : 13] Now that's true not only of getting out of bed, but it's true of every spiritual deed that you will ever do in life. There is the willing to do it, the desire to do it, and there is the actual power that carries it out and brings it into fruition.

And what Paul is telling us is that God is the one who is working both in us. Not one, not the other, but both. He's giving us the will.

He's working in our wills, exciting that inner disposition to want to do what is His good pleasure. And then He's also working to bring it to pass.

Now can you see the encouragement in that? Do you ever lack the will to do something that God wants you to? Do you ever lack the desire to keep one of His commandments?

Good news is He has access to your will. He's at work. And it's not just on the outside man. He's at work on the inside, on your will.

[36 : 31] He has the skill to work on the very level of the human desires and the choices to create in me the want to do something that I ought to do.

He can work at that level. Is that not encouraging? And we see it everywhere in Scripture. God doing His work on the wills of men, making them willing in the day of His power.

Psalms 110, verse 3. In 1 Chronicles 29, 14 and following, you have the account of King David who wants to build a temple for the Lord.

He's not the one to do it. His son will do it. But he gathers the goods, the materials. And he himself dumps in all kinds of wealth to have this building built.

And then the people bring their gifts. And there's gold and silver and bronze and precious stones in abundance. And they bring it all for the building, for the dwelling place of Jehovah.

[37 : 34] Now what does David do in response to this great outpouring of giving that he's just had from his people? He doesn't say, boy, you guys are good givers. He goes to God in prayer.

And he gives God thanks for what He has enabled us and them to give to Him. You find that in verses 14 and 5.

Who am I and who are my people that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

He's recognizing that God is the one who's worked in them so that they have anything to give back to Him. so that they even have the desire, the want to give back to Him.

He says at the end of his prayer, O Lord, God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever and keep their hearts loyal to you.

[38 : 39] God has access to the desires of your heart. Keep this desire in their heart. You put that desire in their heart and now keep it there.

Isn't that encouraging? You don't have a desire for this. You've got one to go to who is able to give you the desires, the very want to of what He calls you to do.

He works to will what is good. And this is also encouraging because there are other times when the will is present but the ability is not.

We heard one of those in Sunday school, didn't we, this morning? That we can be in a situation where we want to do the project, to pray, or whatever it is, but we don't have the ability to bring it to pass.

Paul says in Romans 7, 18, For I have the desire to do what is good. That much is there, but I cannot carry it out. How to bring it about I do not know.

[39:41] Well, is it not good news to know that God not only works in us the desire to do what's good, but He actually works in us to do what is His good pleasure.

So after we've done anything good, we have God to thank for it. Isaiah 26 and verse 12, Lord, all that we have accomplished, You have done for us.

Now that's the great incentive then, to roll up your sleeves and give greater effort at working out your salvation in every area of your life. I'm not left to myself in this business of obeying, of working out my salvation.

There you stand before some difficult duty, some hard command. Maybe it's a providence of God, some burden, some painful trial and God in His providence has dumped it into your life or it feels like He's dumped it.

He's brought it to you and you say, I don't have what it takes to bear up under this trial.

Furthermore, I don't even have the desire to bear up under this trial.

[40:49] I don't even want to have the strength to go through this trial. Where's your encouragement at that point, Christian? Well, it's in the one who's at work within you, giving you both the will and the power to act according to His good pleasure.

Lord, I don't have love for this person. You do talk to the Lord that way, don't you? You drop your pretense and you tell Him the way it is, Lord, I don't love this person, but you who made a son can make me love this person.

Please help me. Lord, I don't have within me to esteem her higher than myself, to be more concerned about his interest than mine. That's not in me, Lord, but it's in you to be able to work, to will, and to do in me.

Come and work in me your handiwork. Come and do your great works. We see believers praying this way. the psalmist in 119.

36, turn my heart away from worthless things. Turn my heart toward your statutes, not toward selfish gain. Lord, you know this heart is going to look out for my interests.

[42:11] Turn it away from there, Lord. Work on my will so that I'll be turned toward keeping your commands rather than going my way. How can a man pray that if God doesn't have access to the will?

As if God's hands are tied, oh, that's your will, I can't touch your will. Lord, that's my only hope that this will ever go any different direction than toward selfish gain, is if you come and turn my heart.

Oh, turn it, Lord. Paul's reminding us that this is our God who's at work within us. Hebrews 13, 21, may he, God, work in us what is pleasing in his sight.

Isn't that an encouragement? That he works in us the very thing that pleases him. So pray that way. Are you willing to pray that way? Are you willing to be made willing?

Lord, I don't have the will even, much less the power, but come and work in me to will and to do of your good pleasure. You see the encouragement? Paul's, he's just getting warmed up with his commands.

[43:17] Well, this one on humility and unity is big enough to just, we need the creator God to create in us anything, everything that has to do with unity in the church.

But he's not done. He's going to go on next week and say, do everything without complaining and arguing. Now, how's that? Are you ready to climb that, Himalayan? Well, I am because God is at work within me.

The God who created the Himalayans is at work within me. And if he's told me to start climbing and to get to work, I also learned that He's at work in me to give me the strength and the will to climb one step at a time.

So I'm encouraged. But this word also has something for our humility, doesn't it? And don't forget, that's our great need in the context. Therefore, we're reminded I need to be humble like Christ.

Well, here's a help. How's this for a help? If God is working in me both to will and to do what pleases Him, what is there left for me to boast in?

[44 : 24] Well, there would be nothing, I guess. That's right. He's so designed, salvation, sanctification, the whole thing, so that it leaves all the praise at His door and none at ours.

In all my working, I am only working out what God is working in me. All my activity in the spiritual life is the result of God's prior working in me.

The cause is God's work in me. The effect is my working out my salvation. Am I prayerful? Am I prayerful in any sense?

As we heard this morning, God makes me prayerful. He's the one who shows me my need. He's the one who gives me help to know how to pray. He's the one that gives me faith to believe that when I pray, the maker of the universe is listening to me as if he had no one else to listen to.

He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek. I didn't teach myself that. He's working in me. If I'm prayerful, it's because God's working. Nothing for me to boast.

[45 : 30] So you're a man of prayer. You're a woman of prayer. Praise God. We need more. Lay all the praise at God's feet. Am I obeying God's commands? Am I a step ahead of this guy over here?

God's the one who makes me willing and able to obey. Do I want to please him above my own pleasures? He works in me to will and to do what is pleasing.

Am I giving my money to kingdom concerns? God makes me willing to lay up treasures in heaven rather than on earth where moth and rust corrupt. He's the one who overcomes my innate selfishness and greed.

So there's nothing to boast. If you give 50% of your income to God, where did the willingness come? Where did the activity, the ability to do it come from?

And so the humility comes when we realize I'm so weak and sinful that for anything truly pleasing to God to come out of this life, John Heaney, it has to be worked in me by God, the very desire to do it and the very activity to bring it to pass.

[46 : 39] Now that's humbly and it's meant to be. Do I come to Scripture hungering and thirsting for righteousness? He creates the appetite in me. Did I come to church this morning wanting to worship God?

Wanting to forget everything for an hour and enter into His presence and see Him in His glory and worship Him? Where did that desire? He worked it in you to want to be here this morning.

Did I want to tell others about Jesus this week? Did I resist any temptation this week? It was God's energy working in me. What otherwise I would never do. There's no room for boasting in the Christian life.

I do nothing good but what He first works within me. Apart from me, you can do nothing. It's true, Paul says. So we have nothing to take credit for except our sin as one has said that the only thing we bring to salvation is the sin that makes it necessary and all the rest God provides for us or works in us.

Salvation is of the Lord. Well, He is at work in me and that's why I keep on working out my salvation. Humbly, but oh so encouraging.

[48 : 03] A concluding lesson or two. This text gives us the right relationship between God's activity and our activity. God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, however you want to call it.

This command to work out my salvation with fear and trembling is a call to diligent effort in the Christian life. Get busy, John, it says to me. But the reminder that God is the one working in me to will and to do, of His good pleasure, is a call to dependence upon God.

To trusting in His work so that I can do what is good in His sight. Now, which is it? My diligent effort or dependence on God?

Well, it is both. And that's what Paul is saying to us in verses 12 and 13. It's both. It's not one without the other. They're tied together. These things stand or fall together. And how many erroneous views and practices come from the imbalance at this very point?

Stressing one side to the neglect of the other. And so you have people who are working so hard at the Christian life. And they're trying to discipline their life to look a certain way.

[49 : 16] And they're not depending on the Lord. They're not praying, Lord, if you don't help me, I can't even move an inch. I can't even move my will.

Well, that's one error on the one side. But on the other hand, you have people saying, well, verse 13, if God is working in me, well, then I don't need to make any effort to work out my salvation. I just get in the way and follow things up.

God's at work within me. Exactly wrong. Paul argues just the opposite. According to the apostle, the reminder that God is working in me is not meant to make me lazier or apathetic, but it's meant to spur me on to greater energy and greater activity in working out my salvation.

This is the incentive to my working out my salvation. God's at work in me. So, I don't wait around to feel some power of God working in me before I open my Bible and start reading.

I don't wait around for some feeling of God working in me before I draw away from life's activities, get a loan with God and pray.

[50 : 29] No, I work out my salvation with fear and tremor. I go at it with all my energies and all the while I'm doing it, I'm saying, oh God, come and work in me both to will and to do of your good pleasure knowing that if I am doing anything that's pleasing to him, it's because he's working it in me.

The two go hand in hand and one must not subvert the other. It's said of King Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 31-32, in everything that he undertook in the service of God, in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and he worked wholeheartedly.

That's worth being, and so he prospered, it says. And everything he undertook, in service to God and obedience to his laws, he sought his God and he worked wholeheartedly and so he prospered. That's worthy of being a life's verse. And it brings together what Paul has brought together in Philippians 2, 12 and 13. Dependence upon God's working in us, even while wholeheartedly working out our salvation.

You have a tendency to one error or the other. Do you know which your tendency is? I'm going to state it, a warning both ways. Don't make prayer a substitute for your hard work.

[51 : 57] Some of you need to hear that this morning. That's the word, the application of God's word to you this morning. Don't make dependence on God in prayer a substitute for your own hard work.

Now there's others out there that need to hear this more than that perhaps. Don't make your own hard work a substitute for prayer and dependence upon God.

Do you know which you are? Do you tend more just to rolling up your sleeves and diving in without crying out for help? Or do you just tend to pray about it and act like God's got to work it all out?

I'm not going to do anything about it. It's not one or the other. It's work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Why? Because God is working in you willing to do of his good pleasure.

Dependence and diligence. And lastly, a word to the unconverted. If we Christians are still so sinful that we can't do anything that pleases God unless he works in us the will and the act of his good pleasure, how do you ever hope to do one thing that would win you favor with God?

[53 : 10] Can you just see just for a moment the humbling view of yourself that you don't have what it takes? You don't have the will. You don't have the capacity, the power to bring your life into line in such a way with God's law that he's pleased with you.

That ought to be a humbling thought. Some of you need to be low before the Lord this morning. God, that's me. I can't do this. I can't walk this way. But there's an encouraging thought.

There's a God who makes men willing in the day of his power. There's a God who enables people to do things that they otherwise never would do or could do. And he's the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He's the God who's present this morning. We just read about that. He's here. He's working in people. Do you know that? That's the encouragement.

Seek this God in Christ. Give up any hope of your working yourself up to his pleasure. Father, cast yourself on his mercy and ask him to save you and ask him to work in you a willingness and a power to do what pleases him.

[54 : 18] Well, God has spoken to us. Let's speak back to him in a word of prayer. How am I to be working out my salvation in all these areas of my life?

Let's bring it to the Lord and let's be honest before him in confessing our need, our sin, and trusting in his mercy. Let's all pray. Father in heaven, thank you for your word.

Thank you that it speaks so clearly to our condition, showing us what we are, so as to humble us and get us off our high horse. Thank you that it also encourages us.

It does not leave us despairing because there's a God on the throne, there's a Savior at your right hand who works in the hearts of men what pleases you. Do that work in each of us, saved and lost

alike, for the praise of our great God and Savior.
We ask in Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.