

PHILIPPIANS Part 8: Working Out Our Salvation 07.25.10

Jessica Reads Philippians 2:12-18

Video: “You Do the Math” [3:24]

Intro: What do you think? Is the paradox of our salvation, the distinction between faith and works, something that adds up in your mind like a math equation? That is how our minds work, isn't it? We want everything to add up so neatly. We want our faith to be like a math equation, where we can define exactly what we believe. The truth is that it doesn't always work out so well. The faith of Christianity requires some, well... faith. There are parts of our faith that seem like a paradox.

The Paradox of Our Salvation

On the one hand: Salvation is entirely of **GOD**.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:8 NIV

It was upon this verse and others that the Protestants protested, the theological battleground that began the Reform. The battle cry 500 years ago (and for many today) remains that justification is by **grace alone** through **faith alone** because of **Christ alone**. Three Ds:

- God who works in us initially so we have the **DESIRE TO BE SAVED**.
- The continuance of that process is **DEPENDENT UPON GOD**.
- The ultimate end of salvation is **DETERMINED BY GOD**.

The work of salvation is BEGUN, CONTINUED, AND COMPLETED in God!

Yet, on the other hand: a sense in which salvation is of **MAN**.

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”
Philippians 2:12b ESV

How can this be? If salvation is entirely of God, how could it be possible that Paul would write: “Work out your own salvation?” What is there to work out? What about justification by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone? It seems to me that Paul here is not so much talking about justification - the means by which we are saved (even though he uses the word salvation) as much as he is referring to the evidence of salvation. *To understand this we need to learn another word:*

SANCTIFICATION - process of working out our salvation; our spiritual growth to become the person God desires.

It wouldn't make sense for Paul to flip on a dime his long-held views of salvation by faith alone. In fact Paul goes on to say in the very next verse that God is working in us. And remember he also just finished writing about the incredible work that Christ did by coming to earth as a human and dying on a cross. So what is “work out your own salvation”

about? *It's not so much a matter of what we do to get to Heaven as much as it is a response to Christ now that we are going to Heaven!*

Illustration: Another way of saying this is that if you are really on the right road, really saved by faith alone in Christ alone... then these are the signs you should be seeing while you're traveling. When you travel on the highway you watch to see the right signs, to make sure you're going the right way. One time my brother, dad, and uncle were traveling to Florida when they stopped for gas around midnight. My brother, who had been sleeping, took the next driving shift got back on the interstate and drove for almost six hours... the wrong way. There were two interstates and he got on the wrong one! He drove East instead of South. There was no shortcut. Their only way back was to drive another six hours west to get back on the right interstate. He didn't know the signs he was supposed to be following. In the same way we need to know the signs of our salvation, to make sure we're heading in the right direction.

Eight "EA" Signs of My Salvation



EFFECTIVE ACTION

"For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Philippians 2:13 ESV

The work of God is effective. He does good work. If He is working in us, we will begin to see a change in our actions.

ἐνεργέω **energéō** - in work, operative, active, to be effective

We find here that God works in me in two distinct fashions:

1st -God works in me both to cause me to want to do that which pleases Him as well as

2nd - God works in me to enable me to be able to do it.

"He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion." Philippians 1:6 ESV



EVER-PRESENT AWE

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Phil. 2:12 ESV

This "fear and trembling" isn't so much the fear that a slave has for an angry master, as much as it is a reverential, all-encompassing, ever-present awe that God is at work *in me!* There is a new sense that I want to get this right. That I don't want to disappoint. That I realize the sacrifice that Christ has made for me and that I don't want it to be for nothing. I want to demonstrate faithfulness in my thought, word and deed.



ENCOURAGING ACTIVITY

Do all things without murmuring and arguing." Phil. 2:14 NRSV

γογγυσμός **gongusmós** - an onomatopoeic word, word based on sound, like buzz, means grumbling, murmuring. Only 4x NT. When 70 scholars in Alexandria 200 BC were translating the

OT, they searched for the right word to describe the Israelites grumbling and murmuring against Moses. This was the word.

It is a natural thing we do. Without thinking, we grumble, complain, talk behind people's back, tear others down - never satisfied about politics, religion, work, family. Paul says one of the signs of God at work in us is that we begin to feel badly when we behave this way. Peter tells us how to handle it:

“Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” 1 Pet 4:9 ESV

Why? because it's harder to mutter about people we love and show hospitality to. Also, if you've ever been with someone who felt forced to “be hospitable” you know it shows.

“Questioning” ESV, “Arguing” NIV - Doesn't mean we shouldn't question our faith. It's about endless debate with no purpose other than argue. Not encouraging or effective.



EVOLVING AUTHENTICITY

“so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault.” Philippians 2:15a NIV

“so that you may be” has a future possibility ring to it. Not expectation that we will be blameless and pure, without fault right now - no one's perfect. But this is our direction. This is how we are evolving with God's work in us. We genuinely desire to be innocent. That increasingly becomes the real, genuine, authentic us - because we are children of God and want to please him. This is a sure sign of change. Before you only wanted to please yourself!



ENTICING ATTRACTIVENESS

There is a purpose to our evolving authenticity, our becoming blameless, which goes beyond pleasing God. This is the primary way that God attracts new people to the Christian faith. Within the church we have another word for that: EVANGELISM. To share the good news of Christ. But many of us have really weird ideas of how to go about this. There is not a whiff of forcing anyone ever to hear the gospel or accept Christ. If we are really seeing God at work in us the we will be like a breath of fresh air...

Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God.” Philippians 2:15 The Message



ELEVATED AUTHORITY of the gospel in my life.

“Hold firmly to the word of life.” Philippians 2:16a NLT

This doesn't mean so much the Bible as the Word of God, though that is really important. Here means more the good news of Christ is something I hold fast. Nothing else works.

When disciples were abandoning Jesus, he asked the twelve if they wanted to leave too. Peter responded:

“Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life.” John 6:68 GNT

When our faith is genuine, God is really at work in our lives, there is this sense that there is no where else to turn to, this is our final and last hope.



EXPECTANT AWAITING of Christ to return.

“So when Christ comes again, I can be happy because my work was not wasted. I ran the race and won.” Philippians 2:16 NCV

We talked about this last week. Not much more now. Evidence of God at work. There is also this supreme sense of purpose that we now have as Christ-followers. God has not just saved me for my ticket to heaven. He has saved me because I am part of his plan to rescue His creation. More than anything else, I want to finish well. (August 15th).



EXTRAORDINARY ATTITUDE of joy and gladness.

“I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.” Philippians 2:17b-18 NIV

Recall that Paul is in prison and possibly facing his own execution. He just finished talking about pouring out his life as a sacrificial offering. And with the very next breath he says truthfully that he is glad and rejoicing. And with the very next breath he asks the Philippians that they should also be glad and rejoicing! This is an extraordinary attitude and is another certain sign of God at work within me. When I seem to be joyful despite the circumstances... when I can be joyful even when I honestly must admit to not being happy... this is when I can know God is at work in my life.

Conclusion: You may have wondered why I chose to make all eight signs of God at work, of my salvation “EA” points. Was I just bored and looking for an interesting way to write a sermon. Maybe.

Illustration - I’m also reminded of the motto of the division of Electronic Arts, EA Sports. Perhaps you’ve heard it: “It’s in the game.” They have an incredible way of putting the gamer right in the middle of the virtual game. When you play Madden Football, you feel like you’re really calling the plays, throwing the football, making the touchdowns. You may even forget at times that you are playing a virtual game.

But we don’t want our salvation to be virtual. For those of us who are Christ-followers everything we know, all of our future, our eternal lives depend upon us getting this right. We don’t want to settle for virtual. We don’t want to have a cheap version of Christianity. We want to make sure we are really on the right road. Our road is described by Jesus as more a narrow path than a super highway. We want to be watching the signs to make sure we really are on the path. Let’s pray.