

Philippians 2:12-13

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 7/1/2007

How can we live the Christian life?

Prayer

Father, thank You so much for Your goodness and Your graciousness. Father, we praise You for what You have done in Your Son Jesus Christ. We praise You for Your magnificent works. We praise You for Your love that was demonstrated in Christ. We praise You that that love is still demonstrated, that while we were yet sinners, Your Son Jesus Christ died for us. Father, as we look into Your Word today, we pray that You would help us to set aside all wickedness and malice and any sin, Lord God, to confess that to You and humbly receive the Word implanted. And Father, we pray that we would not be like those who look in a mirror and forget immediately who they are after they walked away but, Father, that as we hear Your Word we would be doers of it by Your power and strength. We ask You to convict us and to rebuke us, reprove us, correct us, Lord God, and train us that we would be adequate, equipped for every good work that you have preordained before the foundation of the earth. We thank You so much for this time and we pray that You would be greatly glorified in it. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen

Sermon

The apostle Paul, as he was writing to the Corinthian church, in 2 Corinthians, was concerned that someone may have led them astray from the simplicity of a devotion to Christ. That someone might have come in and made following Christ complex. It ultimately revealed another gospel and another Jesus. In Colossians chapter 2, Paul clearly warns the Colossian church that there are those that would take them captive. He says, "See to it that no one takes you captive." And he gives the list of those empty, worldly things, those philosophies that take believers captive and keep, ultimately, those who are unsaved from hearing truth and understanding the truth. We know, if you've followed the Lord for very long, you know there are many different things that the church comes up with to follow Jesus. There are many different systems or things that come along the pike; A Purpose Driven Life, Prayer of Jabez, whatever it might be, that will help you follow Jesus. That will help you in your Christian life. Many radio shows that sit and tell you the whole time how to live and follow Christ, ultimately. But I think we need to go back to the Word of God to see how to live the Christian life. And that's, I believe, what we're going to see today.

In a nutshell, one of the best statements of the Christian life we have in Scripture, is "To work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God at work in us." Would you turn your Bibles with me to Philippians chapter 2.

Now, again, the apostle Paul is the author in the book of Philippians. He is writing to a body of believers that he loves dearly. He is in chains in Rome; he is under house arrest. And during this time, obviously the Philippians were concerned that maybe the gospel was hindered. And Paul shares with this beloved

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church that the gospel was not hindered at all, but that God was using his chains to magnify and glorify Christ and, ultimately, to expand and pioneer the gospel. And we saw Paul's attitude and mindset that he was confident that the work that God had begun in the Philippians, that same work He would complete until the day of Christ Jesus. But he doesn't leave it at that point; Paul continues to share truth to the Philippian church that God would use, ultimately as we'll see, to build up that church. Paul shared to the Philippians that, "To live is Christ, to die is gain." If the Romans at that time would take him away and kill him, that that would be gain because he's living for Christ and then he would be with Christ, which is much better. But to live was necessary for their sake, to live on, to serve the Philippians. And Paul recognized that God was allowing things, and everything that God allowed He was using for His glory. And Paul desired Christ to be magnified in every way.

And then we saw Paul shift the emphasis to the Philippians; that they were to live and walk in a manner worthy of their great calling- to live as heavenly citizens. They were to stand firm in the truth, they were to strive together for the truth. And they were in no way to be afraid of the opposition to the truth. And then we began chapter two in which Paul began a discourse on unity, ultimately, in the church. And as Dennis shared, he shared the basis of our unity or our motivation for unity. "If there is any encouragement in Christ (and there is), if there is any consolation of love, fellowship in the Spirit....all those things. If these things are true, (and they are of those who are truly saved) "Then (he says) make my joy complete by being of the same mind." Or like minded; same-minded. We saw that word there just meant think, think the same way. And we saw the command later on "Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus." Or this thinking; same word. We saw that the Philippians were exhorted, and we were too, to do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit. To do nothing to self-serve. To do nothing based on serving yourself or empty conceit, thinking that you are something when we are nothing, ultimately.

But in contrast, we are to see others as supreme. Super-exalting them above ourselves in our hearts and minds. Not merely caring for our own interests but for the interests of others. Then we saw the great example of this mindset which was in Christ Jesus, where he said, "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And we saw the wonderful incarnation and humility of the Son of God. What an amazing, wonderful truth as God took on human flesh. That He humbled Himself to the point of obedience, even death on a cross.

We were continually exhorted to have this mind in us, the mindset of Christ Jesus as exemplified in His humility and incarnation. We're commanded as believers to think this way. We are commanded to allow Christ to live through us, ultimately.

Now, last week we saw that Christ was super-exalted or highly exalted because of His humility. He was placed above all things. And He was given the name which is above all the names, the name "The Lord." And we saw that there were two reasons that Christ was declared to be Lord after the incarnation. One, that every knee should bow and, secondly, that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father.

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Ultimately, Christ was exalted after His humiliation so that He would be put in His rightful place again as Lord of all. That, ultimately, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. He is the Sovereign, the Great I AM. He is the Lord and Master of the universe. And at this point, we come to a wonderful portion of text on the heels of this wonderful portion concerning the mindset of Christ, in which we are given, I believe, instructions (the Philippians and then ultimately us) on how to live the Christian life.

Again, let's turn to Philippians chapter 2. Martyn Lloyd Jones, a great preacher of the Word, said, "These two verses are the most perfect summaries of the Christian life to be found anywhere." And I believe he is right as we look at these verses.

So, how are we to do this, how are we to live the Christian life? First thing, I believe we're going to see from this passage, is we are to keep on working out our salvation. Verse 12.

¹² So then, my beloved, 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; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.
[Philippians 2:12-13]

If you look at these two verses, you see the main thought here, the main sentence, basically, the main structure is "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." It is an imperative command. It is in the present tense. And, "Well, Greg what does that mean?" It is a continual action. Be continually, habitually working out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Now, before we look at what that means from our passage, I need to share one caveat. We need to be careful not to say things about this passage that this passage doesn't say. There are those in the cults who say this passage says "work for your salvation with fear and trembling." It doesn't say that. It says, "Work out your salvation." And we'll look at that more in depth.

The Philippians already possessed salvation. They were already saved.

¹ Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: [Philippians 1:1]

We saw a few months ago that the saints are those that are set apart. They are holy because they are in Christ. Verse 6.

⁶ For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.
[Philippians 1:6-7]

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The Philippians were already saved. They weren't working for their salvation, they were commanded here, as we will see, to work out their salvation. And, secondly, folks, Scripture's clear that salvation is not by works; it's by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans chapter 4, as we see the paradigm of faith in the book of Romans. We see Abraham, chapter 4 verse 1. I'll read this for you.

¹ What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works: ⁷ "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. ⁸ "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT." ⁹ Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS RECKONED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." [Romans 4:1-9]

It is by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ when the work of Christ is applied to our lives that we are saved through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Now, hopefully everyone here is the blessed man. Hopefully everyone here is in the category of "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven." I tell you right now, if you're doing anything to accomplish salvation on your own- coming to church or going to this or doing that- you are not saved. That is works. It is only through the work of Christ that God is satisfied, the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, that God is satisfied. When we believe in Christ and trust in Him as Lord, God applies that work to our lives and we are saved. For by grace we have been saved through faith, and that not of yourself. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. Hopefully, everyone here has accepted the free gift of God through Christ and is blessed, having their lawless deeds forgiven.

Now, since the Philippians were already saved, why would Paul tell them to work out their salvation or work out something they already possess? Why would they work out their salvation? Folks, the Bible portrays salvation in three tenses: past, present and future.

There are those of us who were saved in the past; we believed. We repented and believed in Jesus Christ as Lord. We were justified, which means we were declared to be righteous. When you place your faith in Jesus Christ, when you believe in Him, the work that Christ has accomplished is applied to your account. Therefore, God can say, "Righteous." We are declared to be righteous. And we are delivered from the wrath to come. This is what happened to us when we believed, when that transaction was so instantly made, as the hymn writer shares.

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But we also see in Scripture that we are being saved, present tense, the experience of being set apart, being made more like Jesus Christ. We call that sanctification, where God is making us more like Jesus Christ. This is the process, also by faith in what God has said by His Spirit, when the Word of God works in the believer. This is where sin is being weeded out of our lives, and we are being made more like Jesus Christ.

And then there is a future tense of salvation, we see in Scripture, which is glorification. When we are made like Christ, when we see Him, we will be like He is. No more sin, no more sorrow, no more temptation. The old things have passed; everything is gone. The new things have come. It is the consummation of our salvation, and we look forward to that. For if Christ is for this life alone, we are of all men to be pitied. We look forward to what God has promised and given us His Spirit as a pledge to that day, the redemption of our bodies.

So we have three tenses of salvation, and I believe what he is talking about here “working out your salvation” is working out this current, present tense sanctification, ultimately. Now, in our passage we’re going to see first of all, “What does it mean to work it out?” And then we’re going to come back to the “so then”. The “so then” is very important, but we’re going to go past that for a minute, and come back to it. Verse 12.

***¹² So then, my beloved, 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;
[Philippians 2:12]***

Well, what does it mean “to work out your salvation”? Does it mean working at the food bank? Does it mean doing good deeds? Does it mean giving someone a cup of cold water? What does it mean to work out your salvation? There’s a fine line between working it out, we see, in people’s minds and working for it. So, we need to really understand what it means to work out your salvation. Well, what does it mean? I believe we will see in our text today it means, basically, obey.

***¹² So then, my beloved, 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;
[Philippians 2:12]***

Did you see that? In the beginning, Paul explains it, I believe, what it means to work out your salvation which we will see validated by the fact that Christ became obedient to the point of death. We see here “Just as you have always obeyed... work out your salvation.” That’s the structure of this passage here. These Philippians were an obedient church. What a tremendous compliment, we see here in this first verse. “Just as you have always obeyed.” Paul calls them “my beloved”. He loves this church; he loves these saints. “Just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.”

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Folks, I believe we are going to see today that sanctification is about obedience. And the Christian life is about obeying Christ through His Word. And Paul praises these Philippians “just as you have always obeyed” and I believe he’ll be saying, “Keep on obeying.”

Now, the word “work out” here means to carry out, to accomplish, to bring about, to work towards. To carefully fashion. To bring something to its ultimate conclusion. Carry out your salvation to its ultimate conclusion. And we’ll see what that is. Well, what is the goal of sanctification? What is the goal of what Christ is doing in our lives through His Word by His Spirit right now? What is the goal of that?

Romans 8:28. We’re very familiar with this verse.

²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (And then he explains this verse we memorize) ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; ³⁰ and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? [Romans 8:28-32]

God has predestined believers to be conformed to the image of Christ. Christ was perfectly obedient to the point of death. Christ lived the perfect life in total humble submission as a bondservant, in the form of a bondservant, taking on human flesh; being the Living God, humbling Himself. Simply put, I believe working out our salvation, we will see, is to obey. What did Christ do that we should follow? What did He do that we should imitate? What did He do that we should think? Paul says, back in verse 5, “Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Think this way. That’s the command in verse 5. Have this attitude, or literally mind, in yourself which was also in Christ Jesus. And then He explains it, and we’ve gone through this.

⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, (here we go) He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [Philippians 2:6-8]

That humble mindset we are to have includes obedience. Christ obeyed, even to the point of death. Christ humbled Himself by becoming obedient. Simply put, I believe, working out our salvation is to obey. And I believe the context affirms this. “Just as you have always obeyed, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. “

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And now, this word obey is an interesting word because it carries the sense of hearing. Or listening. And then doing. Certainly, when we talk to our children we say, "Listen" when we want to get their attention. We don't say, "Listen" just for the sake of listening; we want them to do something. We want them to obey us. And the idea here in this word is to listen with the intent of obeying. Not merely being hearers. Obedience has nothing to do with those who hear and not do. It has to do with those who hear and act upon what they do.

And folks, Scripture is clear that we are to obey the Word of God, ultimately. Matthew 7:24. A very familiar passage. As Jesus has shared,

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. ²⁵ "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. ²⁶ "And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. ²⁷ "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall." [Matthew 7:24-27]

²¹ Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. ²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. [James 1:21-22]

Are you a doer of the Word by the power of the Holy Spirit? Or are you a deluded hearer?

Simply put, working out our salvation is obeying Christ; doing what He says in His Word. And Paul makes this point concerning when we were saved in Romans 6:15.

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! ¹⁶ Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, [Romans 6:15-17]

When we obey our Lord, we become more like our Lord. And specifically, it is His Word that we obey. We are to have the mindset which was in Christ Jesus, which was a humble obedience. We are to, just as we have always obeyed (or if we have), work out our salvation, continually obeying. We are to do what He says in His Word by His power and strength, as we will see. Now, if we look at this passage we will glean one other truth here concerning obedience. And I believe we need to realize, folks, that our obedience is not dependant on others. So often, we say, "I didn't do that because of them or because of my spouse" or whatever it is. "I have a bad attitude because of the way they are treating me" or whatever it is. We have these excuses for obedience. And from our passage, we see regardless of those

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around us, “So then my beloved” (back to Philippians) “just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.” Not just because I’m around but now much more in my absence.

They’re to obey regardless, whether Paul’s there or not. I want to ask you: Have you blamed your disobedience on the people around you? That’s what Adam did, right? Blamed it on God. Does your obedience depend upon others? As we will see later on, it only depends upon God. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God at work in you.

Now, another quick point I want to make about obedience (and this is not from this text but it’s from some other passages), that obedience and faith are completely inter-related. It is the cultist who obeys without trusting Jesus Christ. It is the cultist that does not abide in Christ and does things in the Bible. Obedience and faith are completely inter-related. And Paul understood and taught the correlation between obedience and faith. And we, in our Romans study, we saw that the book of Romans is bookended by the term “The obedience of faith” (Romans 1:5 and 16:26).

What does it mean to work out your salvation? Our salvation should bring about obedience. 1 Peter 1:1

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure. [1 Peter 1:1-2]

The hymn writer got it write when they wrote Trust And Obey. “When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, what a glory He sheds on our way. While we do His good will, He abides with us still and will with all who will trust and obey.”

I want to ask you, “Do you recognize the Christian life is centered around obedience to Christ?” The Christian life is not about doing the church thing. The Christian life is not about our own focus concerning Christ. It is about obeying Christ. It is about humbling oneself, dying to oneself and following Jesus Christ. And, folks, this concept and this truth has almost been completely omitted from churches these days. The Word of God is not preached and people don’t obey. Sin is rampant and pastors look the other way. They keep giving fleshy messages that draw the world that they think might get saved when they’re really not. Do you remember what it was that I shared the last few weeks, what Jesus said to the Pharisees? “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and not do what I say?” That should be a wake-up call for anyone in here who says that Jesus is their Lord and doesn’t do what He says. Because there will be many on that day and that say, “Lord, Lord, did we not do these things?” And He says, “Depart from Me; I never knew you, you who practice lawlessness.”

Do you see the totality of what God is doing in your life concerning Christ, as centered around obedience? Verse 12, Philippians 2.

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¹² So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation (Or keep working it out) with fear and trembling; [Philippians 2:12]

Now, in our passage I believe Paul gives us two inter-related reasons that help us understand why we are to be working out our salvation, why we are to be doing this. And the first one to arise from the first portion of the verse, verse 12. So then. And this begins with this conjunction in Greek that speaks of an inferential clause, basically inferring something based on what has proceeded. Basically, because of what Paul has just said, so then work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Because of what Paul has just said.

Well, what did Paul just say in our text? What did he say before verse 12? Do you remember he spoke about the exaltation of Christ? About His humble obedience to the point of death. That every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is the Lord. So then, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Because He is the Lord, and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. So then, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

It is because Christ is Lord that we are to obey. So then, because Jesus is Lord, obey Him. Because Jesus Christ is exalted over all, He is commanding us through His Word to do what He says. Because He is Lord, obey Him. Jesus, again, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and not do what I say?" And some of you here are forgetful hearers. And, folks, we need to confess that; we need to be effectual doers. Basically, it's pretty simple. It's a command.

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, (imperative command in Greek) work out your salvation. God is commanding you and I to do this. If we don't do it, we are disobedient. God is commanding us to do it. We need to recognize this is not a suggestion. It is not a system. It is a command in the Word of God. The Philippians were commanded, and we too are commanded to work out our salvation. The Lord of the universe Who is exalted above all, in Whom every knee and every tongue will bow and confess. He's commanding us through His Word to be continually obeying Him. This process of sanctification, which is ultimately, as we will see, Christ living in us. It is the Christian life.

"Ok, I recognize we need to obey; I know I need to obey. I know it so well. I'm convicted by it. I fail and I know I need to obey God. But how do I do it? Do I just muster up the energy to do what God says? Do I make a list in the morning of all the commands in Scripture that I know of and try to accomplish them?" How can we keep on working out our salvation? It seems as though we keep failing.

Again, verse 12. I believe, first of all, we're going to see we have to have the proper attitude.

¹² So then, my beloved, 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; [Philippians 2:12]

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In the Greek, the word is *phobos* and *tromos*. Obey the Lord with fear and trembling. *Phobos* and *tromos*. Well, what does he mean by fear and trembling? One pastor writes, and I believe he does a good job explain these two word. Dale Whitehead.

The word "fear" (*phobos*) first had the meaning of flight, that which is caused by being scared; then, that which caused flight. We get our english word "phobia" from this Greek word. This word in and of itself is a very strong word. But Paul wants to strengthen it even further. Look at the next word.

The word "tremble" (*tromos*) means "To shake involuntarily with fear, excitement, cold etc..." We get our English word "trauma" from this Greek word. This word very graphically portrays to us the depth of the fear that Paul wants us to feel as we work out our salvation or in other words as we live out a life of obedience, he writes.

This is the attitude we are to have. We are not to have a nonchalant attitude towards God and towards obedience. And so many people have that attitude. "Well, I uh, I struggle with worry, I struggle with anger. I struggle with these sins." He says, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. *Phobos* and *tromos*.

Now, before we look at this, obviously the context is in reference to God. But I believe we also see in Scripture in reference to sinning, we need to fear and tremble. Because Jesus is Lord over all, because every knee will bow and every tongue will confess, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. So then, do this. And I believe first of all, we should fear and tremble in reference to sinning against God. When we have a proper view of God as revealed in His Word, it should cause us to fear and tremble in relationship to the prospect of sinning against Him.

Do you remember when God was establishing a covenant with Israel, His covenant with them when He spoke from the mountain? Do you remember the response of the Israelites when they heard God's Word and then God's response through Moses? Exodus 20:20. Do you want to turn back there with me; hold your hand in Philippians and let's turn to Exodus 20. And we'll look at verse 18 to start. Exodus 20, verse 18.

¹⁸ And all the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance. (This was when God was revealing His law to them) ¹⁹ Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, lest we die." ²⁰ And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, (why?) so that you may not sin." [Exodus 20:18-20]

If you don't fear God, you sin it up, right? If you don't fear consequences from a living and Holy God, you just sin it up and don't care about it and give a quick prayer, "Lord, uh, I confess my sin; I'm good to go again." Right? Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, *phobos* and *tromos*.

And Hebrews chapter 12 gives us more insight, even into Moses in this circumstance. Hebrews 12:21.

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²¹ And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I am full of (phobos) fear and (tromos) trembling." [Hebrews 12:21]

Do you remember the response of the church in Acts 5, with Ananias and Sapphira? Do you remember that story, the true story of Ananias and Sapphira? God's view towards sin, especially in this infant church? We take it so lightly; we take it so nonchalantly because we don't fear God. Acts 5:1. So let's turn to Acts 5:1 and put your hand in there too and we'll read this also.

¹ But a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, ² and kept back some of the price for himself, (he just wanted to make it look like it to the church that he was giving a big donation and get the accolades like everyone else was, but actually kept back some for himself) with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. ³ But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land? ⁴ "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God." ⁵ And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; (and listen) and great fear came upon all who heard of it. ⁶ And the young men arose and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. ⁷ Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price." ⁹ Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out as well." ¹⁰ And she fell immediately at his feet, and breathed her last; and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things. [Acts 5:1-10]

Work out your salvation with phobos and tromos. God is gracious and we don't fall dead at this time every time we sin against him. But the command is for us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. We know from 1 Corinthians 11 that God does bring about discipline unto death. And 1 John also. Work out your salvation. And, folks, if we do not have a proper attitude of fear and trembling, we might look at sin with a haphazard attitude. And this is the attitude that forgets God's absolute hatred of sin but it also forgets the price that was paid. That although God absolutely despises sin, and He will bring His judgment upon sinners, that instead He sent His Son Jesus Christ to bear our sins in His body on the cross. That Christ bore the punishment for our sins. And when we have a haphazard view of sin, we downgrade the cross. Folks, to have a haphazard view of sin is to have a haphazard view of the cross.

Listen to these passages concerning the Word of God and sin. Psalm 4.

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³ But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him. (and the psalmist writes) ⁴ Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. ⁵ Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD. [Psalm 4:3-5]

We ought to fear when the prospect of sinning comes across our path, when we are tempted to sin. We are so deceived at times that there will be no consequences. Certainly, salvation-wise if we are truly saved there are no eternal consequences in terms of forgiveness but ultimately, there are consequences in our walk and the rewards to come. Isaiah 66 verse 1. And I pray we would be like this.

¹ Thus says the LORD, "Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? ² "For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But to this one I will look, (God created all things but He says, "To this one I will look") To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word. [Isaiah 66:1-2]

Do you take God's Word lightly? Or do you listen with the intent of obeying? As the Living God has commanded us, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. We're not to be having a happy, clappy time of whatever. We are to be obeying the Lord and what He says. And within that, there is great joy but it is in the context of obeying the Lord. Now, ultimately to have a healthy fear of sin, we must have a healthy fear of God. To work out our salvation with fear and trembling is to work out our salvation in the context of fear and trembling God.

Kenneth Weust writes,

The salvation spoken of here is not justification, but sanctification, victory over sin and the living of a life pleasing to the Lord Jesus. They are to see to it that they make progress in their Christian lives. They are to do this with fear and trembling. This is not a slavish terror, but a wholesome caution. "This fear is self-distrust; it is tenderness of conscience; it is vigilance against temptation; it is the fear which inspiration opposes to high-mindedness in the admonition, 'be not high-minded but fear.' It is taking heed lest we fall; it is a constant apprehension of the deceitfulness of the heart, and of the insidiousness and power of inward corruption. It is the caution and circumspection which timidly shrinks from whatever would offend and dishonor God and the Savior." It is in essence it is our human responsibility.

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. It is clear that a healthy fear of the Lord and disdain for our sin, within that context or without having those things, we cannot be obedient. If we don't fear the Lord and disdain sin, we're not going to obey Him. You can't work out your salvation with anything but fear and trembling. It doesn't work. We try to obey. We wonder, "Why don't I obey the Lord?" We don't fear the Lord. We are to work out our salvation. We need to remember our sin put Jesus on the cross. 1 Peter 1:17.

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¹⁷ And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, (if you believe He's the judge) conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. [1 Peter 1:17-19]

If you have a haphazard view of sin, you have a haphazard view of Christ. That's why it's so ironic when churches, you know, whip it all up about Jesus and all this stuff but yet they allow sin to remain rampant in the church. It's hypocrisy. Listen to these Psalms. Psalm 96:9, and we read it earlier.

⁹ Worship the LORD in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth. [Psalm 96:9]

⁸ Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. [Psalm 33:8]

¹¹ Worship the LORD with reverence, And rejoice with trembling. [Psalm 2:11]

As Solomon completes the book of Ecclesiastes, and He compares the endless writing of books with the Word of God, He says, "When all else is said and done, fear God and keep His commandments for this applies to every man."

Folks, I believe the church has lost a fear of the Lord. I mean a healthy fear, a righteous fear of the Lord and a disdain for sin. No wonder there's so much disobedience! No one fears the Lord. Under the guise of evangelism, the church has thrown out the faithful, systematic teaching of the Word of God for fear of how the world would react rather than fearing the Lord and how He would react. Folks, it's backwards. And folks, one of the attributes of those who do not know Christ is that they don't fear God. As Paul summarizes the case against the Jews and the Gentiles in Romans chapter 3, he says, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." And I tell you today, if you have no fear of God, you're not saved. That is Paul's conclusion from the Old Testament to those who have not come to Christ. That's what identifies an unbeliever; there's no fear of God before their eyes. And believers are to work out their salvation with phobos and tromos.

Now, some of us, our fear has become dulled. We become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We need to just repent, "Lord God, I'm sorry. I haven't feared You, I haven't revered You. I haven't trembled at Your Word. I'm sorry." We are to be working out our salvation with fear and trembling because Jesus the Lord will call us to account and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. We will all give an account. Romans 14:12. Folks, the fear of God manifests itself in the context of obedience.

If you want to see someone who fears the Lord, that's someone who obeys by His power as we will see. The Psalm that Dennis read, Psalm 34 verse 7.

⁷ The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, And rescues them. ⁸ O taste and see that the LORD is good; (He's not a terrible Master. When we fear and

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revere our good and gracious God Who gave Himself for us, we're not putting ourselves under some terrible bondage. We are being under the wonderful Lord who gave Himself for us.) **How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!** ⁹ **O fear the LORD, you His saints;** (that's us) **For to those who fear Him, there is no want.** ¹⁰ **The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; But they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing.** (And then David says, "Hey, I'm going to teach you the fear of the Lord.) ¹¹ **Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.** (And here he goes) ¹² **Who is the man who desires life, And loves length of days that he may see good?** (Here it is) ¹³ **Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking deceit.** ¹⁴ **Depart from evil, and do good; Seek peace, and pursue it. [Psalm 34:7-14]**

It's obedience. I'll show you the fear of the Lord. You depart from evil and do good.

What's your attitude towards sin in your life? We all sin. If we say we have no sin, we lie. We all sin, we all struggle, we all mess up. And I'm not talking about continual, habitual sin of the nonbeliever but those sins we are caught up in when we mess up. Those attitudes, those instances where we worry. Those things. What is your attitude towards those things? Are you heartbroken over that before the living God or is it a nonchalant attitude like, "Ah, I'm forgiven for that"? Do you see grumbling, worry, lust, anger, drunkenness, unforgiveness, failing to fellowship with one another like God does? It's serious. It's so serious that He sent His Son to die for it. Do we take it seriously that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures? Work out your salvation with phobos and tromos.

How can we do this? We have to have the proper attitude, obviously, phobos and tromos. But we also need to realize it is not up to us to work out our salvation. How does that work? Work it out but yet it's not up to you? Let's look at our passage again.

¹² **So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, (it's obedience) not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;** (why?) ¹³ **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. [Philippians 2:12-13]**

Some of you may have been cringing in your seats hearing all these things we are to do and realizing we don't have the power to do it. Now if you are unsaved, you do not have the power; you cannot do it. It is impossible. You don't even have the desire to do it. You're hearing this and going, "Well, I don't really care about this. I just want to get out of here." But if you're saved, you realize this is God commanding me to do this but I have a problem- how do I do it? How do I do it? I want to do it but I don't have the power to do it. Here's the explanation.

For it is God who is at work in you. What he is saying is that we can obey with fear and trembling because God is at work in us. And here we have the paradigm of the Christian walk. Human responsibility with Divine enablement. God commands you to do something and we step out in faith, and He enables us to do it by His power and strength as His Word works in our lives. Human

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responsibility with Divine enablement- that is the Christian walk. We're not robots. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God at work in you.

How can we do it? Because God is at work in us. There's no way to live the Christian life. It's the Christian life, it is Christ living through us. Otherwise, it's Greg's life or Bob's life. That's not living the Christian life. The Christian life is when Christ lives His life through us, when we depend upon Him, trust in Him and obey what He says.

Jesus put it this way.

⁴ "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. [John 15:4-5]

And He goes on to say, "My Word abides in you." Paul states this truth in 2 Corinthians 3:5.

⁵ Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, [2 Corinthians 3:5]

² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; (It's all about Christ and knowing Him) ³ seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, (Here it is; it is God at work in you) through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. [2 Peter 1:2-4]

God is at work in us through His Word in our hearts. How can we obey? How can we work it out with fear and trembling? We recognize God is at work in us. It is the Living God who lives the Christian life in submitted believers. How does God work through us? Is it through just a sense of knowing God's around or He's gonna work through me? How does He do it? What is the means in which God brings about sanctification which is this current process of salvation, being made like Christ? What is the means?

² Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, [1 Peter 2:2]

¹⁴ "But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves. ¹⁴ "I have given them Thy word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. ¹⁸ "As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent

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them into the world. ¹⁹ **"And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. [John 17:13-19]**

¹³ **And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. [1 Thessalonians 2:13]**

It's the Word of God by the Spirit of God that works in the believer. For God is at work in you. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. His Spirit teaches and applies the Word to our heart and enables us to obey Him. Human responsibility, Divine enablement through the Word and the Spirit of God.

Do you want to obey? Do you want to grow? Do you want to walk closer? Hide His Word in your heart. And I want to ask you, "Is the Word of God a priority for you?" If it's not, I'll tell you right now you have a very dim view of God. And the fear of the Lord, if you've ever had it, has faded. We know that, and our day to day experience as the Word gets pushed further from our hearts even in the moments during the day, our fear of God gets pushed away from our hearts as we begin to be self-focused.

Now, as God is at work in our hearts what is it that He accomplishes? Specifically first, His will.

¹³ **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. [Philippians 2:13]**

The Lord deals with us as moral agents. It is the great paradox we cannot understand, how God is sovereign and yet we are still responsible. And this passage resolves that paradox to the extent that God wants us to understand. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure." Folks, when God uses His Word by His Spirit and fashions our wills, ultimately we will do His work. Scripture makes it clear that we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which He prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. And God has sovereignly ordained what we will do in advance. But yet He has chosen the means which is humble, obedient submission to Christ. And God works in us. And it is all for His good pleasure.

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Are you doing that? Honestly, are you working out your salvation with fear and trembling? Are you obeying the Lord with fear and trembling? Because He's at work in you. Does this verse ring true in your heart? Well, some of you, you don't fear God at all. And Scripture says it is a terrifying thing to fall in the hands of a Living God. You don't fear Him now but you will greatly be terrified when you come into His presence if you are not redeemed. And I beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. Come before Him now. Today is the day of salvation. Do not delay. Do not harden your hearts. And entreat Him and call upon Him for salvation. "Lord Jesus, save me. I am sinful. I've been going the wrong way. I am wicked. I need You. I believe that You rose from the dead. That You died for my sins. Save me, Lord Jesus." And He'll save you.

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And let me ask those who, in this room, claim to believe in Christ, “Do you fear God?” As I’ve shared earlier, one of the attributes of those who are not saved is there is no fear of God before their eyes. Do you tremble at His Word or do you take lightly what He says? When He says, “Be anxious for nothing” do you say, “Yeah... but there’s so many things I’ve got to do.” When He says, “Husbands, love your wives” do you say, “Yeah... but You don’t know her.” “Wives, submit to your husbands.” “Yeah... but you don’t know him.”

Or do you do what He says and allow Him to enable you, for it is God at work in you. Are you living the life of obedience, letting God empower you through His Word? Folks, the Christian life is trusting Him and obeying Him. It’s pretty simple. Don’t let anyone take you captive through a system of Christianity in a book or whatever it is. It’s simply trusting Him and obeying Him. Working out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God at work in you.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. And Father, we readily acknowledge that we do not fear You and tremble before You like we should. But we know even in Your Word it says that we can rejoice with trembling. Lord, You are a good God. You are a gracious Master. You are wonderfully good and gracious, God. We praise You for sending Your Son. We praise You that He took care of our sin in His body on the cross. Father, help us to have a reverence and respect and a fear for you. Help us to listen to Your psalmist who said, “I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” May we learn from Your Word. May we learn to obey. May we shutter at the possibility of disobeying You. And Lord, we know that You’re not a tyrant waiting to zap us when we do wrong. But that You desire to deliver us from every temptation. For You have said in Your Word, “No temptation has come upon us except that which is common to man. But that You are faithful and will provide a way of escape.” Father, give us healthy fear and reverence for You as a church. Give us a healthy fear and reverence for You individually. And I pray for anyone here who doesn’t fear You, that before it is too late. That before they are terrified in fear before Your judgment, that they would accept, receive, believe and repent of their sins and trust in Your Son Jesus Christ for salvation. Help us to trust You and obey You. We pray this now in Jesus’ name.

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