

Pastor Matthew Ude

October 15, 2023

INI - SDG

## God At Work In Your Life

**Philippians 2:12-16 NKJ** <sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure. <sup>14</sup> Do all things without complaining and disputing, <sup>15</sup> that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup> holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

**<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;**

Vanessa and I were in a bit of a bind this week. Both cars ended up in the shop. However, Lillo's were kind enough to lend us one of their vehicles. Now the question is how we should respond. There are of course a lot of positive ways to respond to their generosity, but equally many negative ones. How

abominable if we returned their car with no gas, food smeared all over the carpet. Or if we returned the car and started yelling at them because we didn't like the way their car handled or smelled.

We all know that would be detestable behavior. What is sad is that we probably all know people who act that way. What is really sad is that we often act that way to God.

In Philippians Paul is talking about the grace of God which is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord. In our text he reminds us that instead of taking that grace of God and throwing it in God's face, we ought to "work it out." That is to say we ought to respond in a joyful and thankful way to God's grace and make good use of it.

The phrase in our text "work it out" is an unfortunate translation because it implies something different in English than what Paul is trying to say in the Greek. That is the downside to a literal translation.

Paul isn't telling us that we should earn or create our own salvation. He isn't saying that we should work hard so that we can save up enough for our salvation. He is telling us that we should joyfully receive God's grace and then we should use it in our life. The word here means to work thoroughly at something or to commit to a thing. Because it is already ours, we should commit to that salvation and use it.

We don't take God's grace and stick it in the basement and let it sit and mold.

We ought to receive God's grace and make good use of it in our lives.

**V13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.**

Road construction can be quite annoying. We were driving Lillo's car Friday and came to section of road that was so thoroughly covered in orange cones that it was hard to tell where the correct lane was. Road construction can be frustrating. It can be annoying. Until of course the construction is done. Then you have this nice new road.

I've been to Africa. Trust me, the road construction is far less annoying than the shambles that they call roads over there. The road from Accra to Lome is 120 miles, but it takes at least 6 hours to drive it because of how bad that road is.

God is at work in our life. It isn't always going to be pleasant. It is going to get in the way of what you might think you want in your life. It is going to slow you down. But look at what God is trying to accomplish:

“that you may shine like lights“

“that you may be blameless“

that you may not only be the children of God but also look like the children of God

God is at work in your life. That is where this working out of salvation begins, not with what you do but with what God is doing in you and for you.

**"God who works in you."** The word "works" in this passage in Greek is *energae*. It is the word energy. God's energy is at work in and through you. You're like a vacuum Paul says, on your own you sit there quiet and unable to do anything, but when you are plugged in you are filled with power and can do much. God's power fills us and lives in us, so that we can be the children of God in a dark and sin filled world.

**<sup>14</sup> Do all things without complaining and disputing, <sup>15</sup> that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you shine as lights in the world**

What does it take to work out God's grace in your life? Paul is going to give us two concrete steps. The first one is here in verse 14: Stop complaining, stop disputing (arguing).

Paul says you do these two things and you **become *blameless* and *harmless* in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation**. That is the difference between crooked and

harmless, between perverse and blameless; stop complaining and stop arguing.

There are many heroes of faith but only one of them stands out as an example of not complaining. Moses complained. David complained. Elijah complained. The ultimate example we have here is of course Joseph. He had more reason to complain than any other and yet never did.

This was because Joseph knew that God's grace was at work in his life. Whatever happened in his life, he turned to the grace of God and then put that grace to work in his life.

We don't have to argue and we don't have to complain, why? Because God's grace is at work in our life.

We don't have to make sure that we get our way at the voters meeting, because God's grace is at work in our life, and he will bless our work even if we don't choose the perfect answer.

We don't have to complain, because God's grace is at work in our life, and whatever happens to us God will work it for good.

**Joseph went from hated brother, to slave, to prison but God used it for good. Not the good of making Joseph second to Pharaoh, but the good of his plans to create the nation of Israel and through them bring forth Jesus to save us from our sins.**

**<sup>16</sup> holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.**

Second thing to “work out your salvation” is this that you hold fast the word of life.

This is of course the means of grace. This is the gospel in word and sacrament. This is how you stay plugged in to God, so that his energy fills your life. This is how you find reassurance when you fail to stop complaining and stop arguing.

This is what will cause Paul to “rejoice,” not if they become like Joseph, but if they hold fast to the word of life. Through this word of life, God is at work in your life to bring about his forgiveness and his salvation.

### **Work out your own salvation With Fear and Trembling.**

Many of you know your way around heavy-duty equipment. What is the first rule of anything that has any real power? "This is not a toy." You don't play chicken with a steam roller. You don't goof off with a chain saw. You don't reach down under a mower while it is still running. You don't dance around on top of a combine, especially if it is running. These things are powerful machines, and they can do great things, but anyone using them must respect that power.

God's power is at work in our life. That power forgives our sins. It makes us children of God. He does great things for us. But one must approach this power with fear and trembling. Don't mess around with God grace. Use that power in your life, and hold on to that word of life, which washes your sins.

**Amen**