

Philippians 2:12-13

For all of the challenging paradoxes for the Christian, none is perhaps more challenging than the issue of sanctification – growing in your faith and walking with Christ. Is it up to God to make you grow in your walk and in your faith or is it up to you? Which is it? And the answer is – both.

Spiritual growth (sanctification) of a believer requires our diligent effort – it'll never happen without it – and our diligent effort is enabled by the power of God and it can't happen without that either.

Our diligent effort – Vs. 12 – “work out your salvation ...” With ... God's power – Vs. 13 “*God is at work in you.*” It will require every ounce of diligence on our part to follow Christ's example. It will require every bit of power on God's part in order for us to follow Christ's example.

Verse 12a “Therefore” – This opening particle in Greek, “*hoste*” is used to draw a conclusion (or application) from the preceding verses. Paul is now making application from the example of Christ's humility and obedience in verses 5-11.

Vs. 12b – The Greek word “*katergazesthai*” translated “work out” has the idea of bringing to completion. Vs. 13 – God is at “work” in us both to will and “to do” His good pleasure. The Greek word Paul uses for “work” and “do” is the same Greek word “*energein*.”; it is always used of “*the actions of God*”

Verse 12-13 paraphrased, “*Since, my beloved, Jesus Christ has given us the example of humility and obedience, with deep reverence work on until the work of salvation is fully produced in you, following His example even in my absence, for it is the action of God that works in you both to desire and the actions of God in you to do the work for His good pleasure.*”

1. The tendency to stray

- A growing reputation is based on how we act when people are watching
- Growing in sanctification is how we act when people are not watching

As we mature in our sanctification, the way in which we behave moves from an external authority like rules, or an authority figure, to an internal authority which is the Spirit of God.

2. The tendency to stall

Growing as a Christian is going to require a daily *work out*. Each of must decide if we are willing to put forth the effort.

Throughout the New Testament, we are given three dimensions of salvation:

- The past dimension of salvation is our redemption, justification, and inclusion into the family of God. This is accomplished by faith in Christ alone. This event is past tense and forever settled and secure
- The future dimension of salvation is when we will become like Him in perfected glorified bodies (*I John 3:2*). This will occur after our death or if sooner by means of the rapture
- In the interim between our past salvation at our new birth and our future salvation at our glorified eternal state, is this present salvation. This present dimension of salvation is called sanctification.

Here is another way of expressing these three dimensions of *Philippians 2:12*:

- Our past salvation saved us forever from the *penalty* of sin – Jesus Christ bore our penalty on the cross
- Our future salvation will save us forever from the *presence* of sin – that'll be gone forever
- Our present salvation (sanctification) is saving us from the *power* of sin – this enables us with the ability to say “No” to sin. It is an ongoing process with successes and failures

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This present salvation is the process of sanctification where the believer is being challenged to demonstrate growth in Christ, having been redeemed in the past and on the way to being glorified in the future.

What is growing in our sanctification mean? It means death to self, obeying Christ over the long haul, waiting on the final resolution of all rewards in the glorious kingdom of God. We do this with humility and obedience, waiting at times on the Lord but still working on toward the goal of His glory!

3. The tendency for pride

The word “*fear*” here is “*phobos*” which means terror and the word for “*trembling*” is the word “*tromos*” which gives us our word “tremor.” To “fear and tremble” carries the idea of reverential fear and a holy concern to treat God with the honor He deserves; we have a trembling anxiousness to do correctly.

Paul effectively writes here, work out your salvation with that same kind of awe and respect and humility before God, who is our audience; He has revolutionized the way we live; we greatly appreciate Him but we never want to be disrespectful in approaching Him or in our walk with Him. This kind of attitude effectively opposes any temptation to be proud.

Application: In what ways does my life exemplify this type of “fear” and “trembling”? In what ways do I fail?

4. The tendency to take credit

Taking credit can mean to:

- Idolize our accomplishments
- Assume what God has done as something we’ve done
- Avoid sharing other people’s contributions
- Publically fail to recognize God’s work

Vs. 13, “... *it is God who is at work in you, both to will and do of His good pleasure.*” Here’s the paradox, we are commanded to work outwardly, and we’re reminded that the work we do outwardly is a result of God working inwardly. Which, in the context of humility.

There are three other Scripture verses that provide real clarity on this point, ***Galatians 2:20***, “*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*” And ***Colossians 1:29***, “*For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me*” and ***Philippians 4:13***, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*”

His work in us and for us does not eliminate our responsibility to work for Him – and yet:

- When we do work – it is through His energizing strength to do what is right; which doesn’t make obedience easy, but it does make it possible
- When we desire to take action in ministry, we understand that it was first and foremost His desire – ***Psalms 37:4***
- And when we accomplish it – it is for His good pleasure and for His glory
- And as a result, we do not take credit for ourselves; but humbly thank Him for the privilege of laboring for Him and with Him and by means of Him