

Philippians 2:12-13

When Paul says—*work out your own salvation*—he does not mean work **for** your salvation. We do not earn salvation by any work of righteousness which we do. Salvation is a free gift of God's mercy that He freely gives to us to receive by faith.

We know this because Paul wrote in Titus 3, verses 4-5:
But after that (when) the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us

If you believe you contribute one percent to your salvation then you need to repent because God Himself says in Isaiah 43, verse 11: *I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.*

In Psalms 3:8a, we're told: *Salvation belongeth unto the LORD*
In Jonah 2:9, we're told: *Salvation is of the LORD.*

Revelation 7:10 tells us: *Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*
Revelation 19:11 tells us: *Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God*

Because Romans 11:36 says about God—*For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*—this means salvation is His perfect accomplishment that He gives to us to receive as it perfectly is without making any personal contribution whatsoever.

Now, the question is: What about faith? To be saved, don't we have to believe in Jesus Christ? If we don't believe the Lord Jesus Christ is our Savior, then we're not saved. Yes, yes, and yes. The Lord Jesus is not your Savior unless you believe in Him.

When you hear Acts 4:12 says of Jesus Christ—*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*—you must believe in Jesus Christ to be saved. If you don't believe in Him, then you are not saved.

What does it mean to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Faith in Jesus Christ means you believe Jesus saves you from your sins because He shed His blood, died on the cross, and rose from the dead. This is the gospel of Christ.

We are only saved by the gospel of Christ. Let's not forget that Paul said in Romans 1, verse 16: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

To truly believe in Jesus Christ and be saved, you must believe the gospel. If you don't believe in Jesus' death for your sins and His resurrection, then you are not saved. Yet here's what you and I need to understand: You are saved **by** your faith in Jesus Christ but **not because of** your faith in Jesus Christ.

When you are asked the question: How do you know you are saved? If your response is—
“Because I believe in Jesus Christ.”—then your faith is in your faith in Christ, not in Christ alone.

The answer to the question—“How do you know you are saved?”—is this: “Because my Lord Jesus, the Son of God, shed His blood, died for my sins on the cross, and rose from the dead.”

Think about it this way: If you fell into a pit and had no way of getting out yourself, but someone lowers a rope down to you and says—“Grab the rope and I’ll pull you out.”—when you grab the rope and you’re pulled out by the person, are you saved because you grabbed the rope or because the person pulled you out?

If you say—“I’m saved because I grabbed the rope.”—then you’re taking credit from the other person who saved you because you wouldn’t have the rope to grab if he didn’t love you enough to come along with the rope, lower it down, and say: “Grab the rope and I’ll pull you out.”

When you grab the rope, you believe the person’s promise to save you but you are saved because the person fulfills his promise to save you.

And no matter how tight you hold on to the rope, you will not be saved unless the person lifts you up. You don’t lift yourself up by holding on to the rope with all your strength.

The person lifts you all the way up by his strength.

Therefore, he is your savior, not you. **But if you don’t grab the rope, you won’t be saved.** You will not be saved unless you believe in your savior by grabbing the rope.

The same principle applies to your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Lord Jesus is your only Savior **but** you will not be saved unless you believe in Him. And what does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ? You believe in the gospel of Christ which is His death for your sins and resurrection from the dead.

Now since the Scripture, Paul’s letter to Titus, clearly says—*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his (God’s) mercy he saved us*—what does Paul mean when he writes to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi: *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure?*

Salvation is the work God does for us and in us which we must believe in to be saved, but God’s work of salvation for you and in you is shown through your good works.

To explain this, let’s remember what the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 12, verse 33: *Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.* And earlier on Jesus says in the first part of the Matthew 7, verse 17:

every good tree bringeth forth good fruit

So what's this have to do with what Paul writes here? Just as the evidence that a tree has been made good is that the tree bears good fruit since Jesus says—*every good tree bringeth forth good fruit*—the evidence you are belong to Christ Jesus is your good works.

In fact, the Lord Jesus Himself said in John 15: *I am the vine, ye are the branches. And you know what Jesus says next? He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing* (John 15:5).

God's work of salvation for you and in you is shown by your works which His work of salvation produces. As the tree is known by its fruit, your salvation is known by your works.

Yes, there is no salvation by good works. However, salvation is not without good works. Often we quote Ephesians 2, verses 8-9: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*

At the same time, we can't forget that the very next verse says: *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them* (Ephesians 2:10).

Note that: We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto or for good works. Salvation is not redecoration where you're a lifeless, unresponsive statue or puppet. Salvation is regeneration where God works in you both to will and do of His good pleasure.

Now why would I use the word *regeneration*? Well, earlier I mentioned what Paul wrote in Titus 3:4-5. However, I only quoted a portion of it. Titus 3, verse 4-7, says:

*But after that (when) the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, **by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost**; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

So what does regeneration mean? Regeneration means born again. Remember what Jesus says in John 3? *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God* (verse 3). *Ye must be born again* (John 3:7).

Regeneration means you are born again by the power of the Holy Spirit, transforming you into a new creature where in Christ you live and move and have your being.

You are saved by the Holy Ghost renewing you where you are a new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Why do we have to be born again, regenerated by God? Because from the moment you're born, you are dead in your trespasses and sins. This is why Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:1-3

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Notice how the Scripture says that we once/formerly *walked according to the course of this world, according to **the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience***. Paul's speaking about Satan, the devil.

And so we don't think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, right after saying—*the children of disobedience*—Paul immediately says:

among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh (among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh), fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

We fully deserved God's wrath because of our sins yet, thanks be to God, Paul writes this next:

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us (made us alive) together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-7).

So, at one time, Satan used to work in you. As Jesus said to a group of Jews—*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do* (John 8:44a).—the same could be said of you before you repented and believed Jesus is the Lord your Savior since both Jews and Gentiles (meaning you and me) are all under sin and there is no partiality with God (Romans 2:11; 3:9; 3:19).

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us (made us alive) together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

However, if you have not repented and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved, then you are still a child of disobedience, doing the lusts of your flesh which is the lusts of your father the devil and, therefore, you are a child of wrath.

But if you believe Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, then you have been born of God, born again by His grace through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience no longer works in you where you fulfill the lusts of your flesh in harmony with the devil's lusts because, through the Holy Spirit Who now dwells in you, God *worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.*

And because of this, you have a mandate as a born-again son/daughter of God? What is that mandate? *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

What does it mean to *work out your own salvation*? Why should we do so *with fear and trembling*? How does God *worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure*? These are questions we'll answer the next Lord's Day by searching the Scriptures.