
PROPER REPRESENTATION OF GOD

It never ceases to amaze me how God works His timing in my life and leads me to the right place at the right time to show me exactly what I need so I will be directed back to Him. On one hand it is a cycle I wish I didn't go through so much, but it also shows me the great love God has for me because no matter what I do, He leads me back to Him! I know He does this for all of us when we are sensitive to His leading in our lives! I pray that today you look and listen for God!

Let's read through our verses. Philippians 2:12-13 says,

“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; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

Paul transitions in this verse from his command to believers to have the mind of Christ (humble, self-sacrificially loving, and obedient) to a command to believers to carry out their salvation to its ultimate conclusion. We know he is transitioning to a new subject because he uses the words "so then." He wants us to keep the previous instruction in mind, but we are now focusing on something new. We know Paul is talking to believers because he uses the word "beloved." He is talking to the sons and daughters of God in Philippi.

Now let's look at what he says to the beloved. He reminds them of their obedience while he was with them. Remember he is writing this letter from prison so he wants them to remember their time together and the attitude they had while he was in Philippi. The word obedience encompasses listening, attending and submitting. They listened to the scriptures, learned them and applied them to their lives.

The next part of verse twelve shows that Paul is not only reminding them of previous history, but is also instructing them to continue in their obedience and to “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.” Let’s look at this concept. Read Ephesians 2:8-9. Paul is not referring to salvation in the sense of an unsaved individual, so he's not telling them to work to obtain salvation. Ephesians 2:8-9 makes that clear. Neither is Paul referring to a person proving their salvation through their own works. Titus 3:5-7 is evidence of this. So what is Paul saying?

The word for ‘work out’ in Greek is 'katergazesthe' and it means ‘to participate in bringing to the outside something that is on the inside.’ It is also an idiom meaning ‘to carry to its ultimate conclusion.’ Remember what we just finished talking about in verses five through eight? We are instructed to obtain the mind of Christ. We do that by learning His word and living out the instruction in it. In this context Paul is commanding us to participate in bringing the mind of Christ from the inside to the outside. Our salvation is worked out, or carried to its conclusion, when we participate in using the principles we learned in God’s word to carry out good works. See Ephesians 2:10.

At the beginning of the previous paragraph we said we “PARTICIPATE in bringing to the outside something that is on the inside.” Who are we participating with? The Holy Spirit and the doctrine of the Word of God residing in our mind. Only when we are submitted to the power of the Holy Spirit are our works righteous. The last part of verse twelve says we are to work out our salvation with ‘fear and trembling.’ The word fear means ‘reverential awe.’ The word trembling in the Greek expresses ‘radical and total dependency.’ So when we are in reverential awe of God and have radical and total dependency on Him, we will be able to use the knowledge we have of the mind of Christ to participate in working out our salvation by carrying out good works.

Verse thirteen is evidence that it is our dependency upon God that is essential to our participation in carrying our salvation to its conclusion. Verse thirteen says, “for its God who

is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." God is the one who continues to operate within us so that His will is carried out in our lives. This is all done for His good pleasure, meaning His will is carried out to bring Him praise. Wow! When we begin to think that life is about us, let us remember this verse. We are only the vessels that God uses to carry out His will.

Explain in your own words what it means to “work out your own salvation?”

Does working out your salvation include hours upon hours of community service and other good deeds to impress God? Why or why not?

What must our mindset look like while we are working out our own salvation?

We also must remember that it is our choice in every situation to either choose dependency upon God or dependency upon ourselves. The two are directly opposed. One serves us and the other serves and brings glory to God.

Read Ephesians 2:3 and Isaiah 55:8 to close.

REVIEW

~ We are to use our knowledge of the Word of God, the mind of Christ, to carry our salvation to its ultimate conclusion.

~ Our salvation is carried to its conclusion when we use the mind of Christ and operate in fellowship to perform good works that glorify God. Ephesians 2:10

~ Our reverential awe of God and our radical and total dependency upon Him is what helps us carry our salvation to the right conclusion.

~ God is continually operating in us. We must make the decision to either serve Him or us. Ephesians 2:3, Isaiah 55:8.