

Salvation worked in and out

When I was converted, I made this mistake: I thought the battle was already mine, the victory already won, the crown already in my grasp. I thought the old things had passed away, that all things had become new, and that my old corrupt nature, the old life, was gone. But I found out, after serving Christ for a few months, that conversion was only like enlisting in the army—that there was a battle on hand.

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Philippians 2: 12 – 18

1) Work out your salvation (vs. 12 – 13)

- Paul is exhorting believers who are strong obedient believers. He isn't writing to some lukewarm believers who have one foot in the world and one foot in the kingdom (if that were possible).
 - They not only obeyed when Paul was present but also when he was absent
 - This could be both an exhortation and a commendation to live right before God even when no one else is looking.
 - If we look at children in a classroom they will behave themselves while the teacher is in the classroom. If the teacher has to go out the class for a while many of them start misbehaving. This is typical of many Christian's lives as well.
- We, who are already believers in Christ, are then exhorted to continue to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.
 - This does not mean that we are saved by our own works but rather an outworking of the salvation that God has already worked in us.
 - It is an outworking of our faith
 - James 2: 20 – 26 You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.
 - We cannot save ourselves. Only God can save us and work His salvation in us. Salvation is a work of God and is always initiated by God.
 - However, having received salvation we have a responsibility to work out that salvation in our practical living the same way Abraham had to practically take Isaac and place him on an altar and Rahab had to practically give lodging to the spies.
 - Salvation is spiritual but has a very real practical outworking in the way we live, in our relationships, in our character, in our attitudes, in our view to life.
 - God initiates salvation and works it into our lives but leaves us with the responsibility of what we're going to do with it.
 - A good football player may be selected for the team but he cannot merely go around boasting that he is on the team. He now has the responsibility to live up to what has been given to him.
 - We have been given the right to be children of God
 - John 1: 12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God
 - We need to live up to that by working out our salvation in fear and in trembling
 - In other words we need to acknowledge the awesome responsibility of being called a child of God.
- God works in us to will and to act according to His good purpose
 - The salvation that God works in us sets our eyes upon His purpose – His pleasure – for our lives

- God works in us in a way that the outworking will be action towards His purposes with the right attitudes
- It will be that which gives Him pleasure in our lives. He gives us the desire and energy to be pleasing to Him.

2) The attitude of salvation being worked out (vs. 14 – 15)

- We are called to do everything without complaining or arguing.
- We need to be people of grace who live above the standards of those who live by law
 - Numbers 14: 2 – 4 All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?” And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”
 - The Israelites had been obedient to leave Egypt and embark on the journey towards God’s purposes but they had not done so with the right attitude.
- It is not that complaining and arguing are the worst of all sins but rather they are the thermometer by which our attitudes are measured
 - It is the outward indication of what is within us.
- If we do everything without complaining or arguing then we will do it joyfully and without resentment.
 - Complaining is to express displeasure, to find fault or to make an accusation. This could be at God or someone else.
 - Thus to do everything without complaining would be to accept God’s will for us and the accompanying circumstances that comes with it joyfully.
 - Arguing is to disagree or quarrel.
 - When we have not set our mind on pleasing God and want our own way we end up arguing with God and others.
 - Resigning ourselves to God’s will for our lives puts our hearts at rest and we live in peace with God and others.
- When we do everything with the right attitude then we will be seen to be pure and blameless, children of God without fault.
 - This doesn’t mean that we have become perfect but rather that our lives are such that people can’t point fingers at us for being hypocrites.
 - If we do sin and make mistakes we admit it and that takes all the accusations out of the mouths of the accusers.
- The world is described as a crooked and depraved generation and we shine like stars in this world
 - The salvation that God has worked in us that we are working out in our lives is in such contrast to the ways of the world that our lives ought to stand out as stars in a clear night sky.
 - The difference in our lives to the lives of the world ought to be distinguishably apparent.

3) Holding out the Word of life (vs. 16 – 18)

- As we work out our salvation with the right attitude we will hold out the Word of life.
 - (The Message) Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night so I’ll have good cause to be proud of you on the day that Christ returns. You’ll be living proof that I didn’t go to all this work for nothing.
 - As we work out our salvation we have life to offer the world around us.
 - Paul gives himself as an example for us to follow that as he poured himself out as a drink offering for the Philippians so should all believers pour their lives out for the world.
- Our delight does not lie in the things of this world but in lives being made whole in Christ.