

We Can Work It Out (Philippians 2:12-13)

In Philippians 2:12-13 there are two "workers" at work. That idea alone reminds us that Christianity is no solo affair - we are always co-laborers, co-operators. We are being directed to "work out" what God has already "worked in" - to bring to completion what is already in place. Whether we are working in an agricultural field or on the sports field, the word means that we are to leave nothing behind. That, of itself, is quite a rebuke to our passive, reflective only, spectator brands of faith. And to do so with "fear and trembling"? There is no room whatsoever for flippancy, arrogance or carelessness. We have received a precious treasure, an unspeakably valuable gift - we are to be tremblingly alive to all its possibilities. We are to have a conscious awe and distrust of our own abilities, all the while maintaining a fearful awe of His ability - lest we miss out on what God (in us) is able to do.

"For God is at work..." (2:13). He is the Cause behind the effect, the Subject that precedes the predicate, the One providing all we need to "work out" our salvation. There is no directive from Him without a corresponding supply. He never asks out of us what He's not already put in us! His effective, energizing power "within" makes our salvation operational "without". We (subjectively) work out our salvation by consenting to the (objective) reality of God working in us. We will not carry this arrangement out to its conclusion without His supply, His power. He will not force or coerce us to work out everything He has put in us.

What is implicit in this arrangement? Salvation is by pure grace - it is all by God's doing - yet such a gift can never be an excuse for passivity. We are not puppets, impersonal tools, or hollow straws through whom God acts. The mystery of our union is neither inert mysticism not fatalistic resignation. It is a divine/human cooperation. What is explicit? We've received everything that is Christian and now, by choice, we are to bring it into the realm of our experience. He is the Agent of stimulation, we of cooperation. It is "by grace... through faith". We have freely received God's gift of grace, we must freely respond in faith. We are not in the active role - we generate nothing of eternal value on our own (Jo 15:5). We are not in a passive role - that would be determinism and make humanity superfluous. We are created and placed in a responsive role - free to choose in relation to the revelation of God. After all, it is "your" salvation (2:12) -no one else can work it out for you!



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BITS and PIECES

The way of Christ is the way of community, of family, of sharing life together. Our salvation may be personal, but it is never really private - in isolation from others. We are not just to forge alternative lifestyles, but an alternative community - one that thinks, chooses, invests differently, uncommonly - because of the Uncommon Life we share in common.



The way of Christ, in others words, is a shared way. It is irreducibly relational. We must freely relate to and share life with others in Christ to be thoroughly transformed. It is how “theology” becomes “spirituality”. It is how we learn to leave behind the “childish” and press on into the “grown up” stages of life.

All that to say we are so grateful to you for sharing the journey with us. Your input into our lives because of the Life we share in common is beyond measure. Your testimonies, your prayers, your gifts of encouragement, your challenges and corrections - all are a part of God at work in our lives so we may “work out” what He has “worked in”.

Thank you! Thank you for your past contributions, your present gifts of yourselves, and, not to be presumptuous, but, thank you for all that is yet to come as we commonly share the Life of our Uncommon Lord!

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| <u>MARCH</u> | |
| 16,23,30 | CCF |
| 7-9 | Silver Springs, MD |
| 11 | Alachua Study |
| 25 | Ocala Study |
| 28-29 | Flushing, NY |
| <u>APRIL</u> | |
| 4-6 | Titusville, FL (772-563-0430) |
| <u>MAY</u> | |
| 23-25 | Dalton, PA (607-625-4612) |
| <u>JUNE</u> | |
| 27-29 | Bar Harbor, ME |

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