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INI - SDG

God At Work

His Presence - His Will - His Power

Philippians 2:12-16 NKJ ¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

How many times have you run into construction this summer? You're driving down the highway. You're already late and then you hit construction. Everything slows down. Traffic is backed up, now you're going to be even later. So annoying when you hit road construction. Except of course when the construction is

done. Then you have a nice new road. It is worth the temporary inconvenience to have a new road.

God is at work in our life. It isn't always going to be pleasant. It is going to get in the way of what you might think you want in your life. It is going to slow you down. But look at what God is trying to accomplish, not just a nice smooth road, but

- that you may shine like lights
- that you may be blameless
- that you may not only be the children of God but also look like the children of God

The letter to the Philippians is a letter of joy. Here again we have another reason to rejoice. Yes, the power of God is at work in our life. Yes, that isn't always pleasant, but the result is well worth it. How many people spend huge amounts of money so that they can go through painful surgeries which they don't need, and yet they do it joyfully so that they can get the perfect nose or better checks. God's plan for us is not to change our face but our heart. How much more joyfully should not we accept God's work in our life.

Therefore, Paul calls us to joyfully work out our own salvation. Since we have received God's salvation we want to put this salvation on display in our life. This is what the phrase really means.

"Work out," not working for, not work to secure, but rather having received it, use it in your life. Like rolling out dough. It isn't something that you don't have and you must work for. It is something you do have, and you want to use it, put it to work in your life.

Think of it in the same context as "I ate pie and ice cream last night now I have to work it out." You are not trying to earn pie and ice cream, you already have it, you're trying to use the calories. Same thing here. You're not trying to earn salvation. You already have it. You are trying to use it in your life. Make it a part of your life. Paul calls us to work on this salvation but as we do so to remember a couple of things.

1. Respect His Presence

When you see that sign, "Road Construction," it is important that you respect that sign, that you slow down, that you take seriously the warning, "fines double in work zone."

So also, Paul tells us that God is at work in your life, we need to take this to heart. We need to take it seriously.

1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

The English of our first verse, verse 12 switches the order and that isn't insignificant. It's not "**work** out your salvation in fear

and trembling," but rather "**With fear and trembling** work out your salvation." This is the power of God at work in our life. This is Christ the creator of the universe coming to dwell in our hearts and minds. Paul's takes it for a given that God is going to be working his salvation in our lives. Our salvation is going to be at work in our life. Paul's point is that while this salvation is at work in our lives, we need to approach it with awe and respect.

Many of you are farmers. Almost all of you know your way around heavy-duty equipment. What is the first rule of anything that has any real power? "This is not a toy." You don't play chicken with a steam roller. You don't goof off with a chain saw. You don't reach down under a mower while it is still running. You don't dance around on top of a combine, especially if it is running. These things are powerful machines, anyone operating one must respect that power. We do not approach God and his work in our life with a ho hum attitude.

When Isaiah saw the vision of God, he fell on his knees. He was overwhelmed with the perfection and glory of God and cried out, "**Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. And my eyes have seen the Lord of glory.**" And then God sent an angel to touch his lips with a burning coal and declared him clean.

Church isn't about, "what does this have to do with my life." Worship is about coming into the presence of God and asking

and receiving from Him blessing and gifts. This is the attitude of awe and respect that we should have not just in church but every day as we consider God's work in our life.

Trust His Will

Second, we must remember that it is God who is working in us, according to **His will and his pleasure**, not according to our will and pleasure.

The phrase "work out your own salvation" sounds like works righteousness. The next verse says, "It is God who works in you both to will and to do." Why would Paul say, "work out your own salvation" then in the next verse "God is the one working in you?"

If we try to stay in control we aren't going to make it. Lucky for us that Paul reminds us we are not in control, "It is God who is at work in your both to will and to do."

Paul assures us the power of God is at work in our life. Yes, we cannot control or accomplish our own salvation, guide the course of the world, or even master our own lives. But we can put our fate, our life, the future of our nation and our world, and most importantly our salvation in the hands of God and trust him. Thy will be done, thy power be, thy kingdom come. It is God who works in you and through you and for you. It is his

power at work in your life to bring about, as Paul has said, his good pleasure.

It can be a scary thing to give over control of our life to someone else. But we remember into whose hands we are placing our fate. These are the hands that were pierced for us. These are the hands that held the little children and blessed them. These are the hands that Thomas touched which still had the holes in them. These are the hands that were and still are raised in blessing. These are the hands that formed the earth and the sky and all that is them. In short these are the hands which are both loving and strong.

Use His Power

Thirdly because God is with us, we do have the power, to accomplish his will.

So, on the one hand you have the mistake that I can do it, but now on the other side you may fall into fatalism. Which is just a fancy word for laziness. The idea that since it is all God's doing, since there is nothing that I can do, since I am not strong enough even to control my own life, therefore who cares I'll just lay back and go with the flow. Nothing I do matters. God or fate is going to bring about his will regardless.

This was Eli's attitude when God sent Samuel to speak to him. "Let it be according to God's will." God was calling Eli to repent, but Eli just went with the flow. Even at his advanced age he should have taken a hold of the power of God and strode forth as a warrior into battle. He should have trusted that God's power could even then make a change. Instead, he just gave up.

Against this attitude Paul says, "God's power is at work in you and through you" and also "work out your own salvation." Yes, it is true that there is nothing you can do on your own, your strength and power is not sufficient, however the power of God is at work in your life.

"God who works" the word "works" in this passage in Greek is *energae*. It is the word energy. God's energy is at work in and through you. You're like a vacuum Paul says on your own you sit there quiet and unable to do anything, but when you are plugged in you are filled with power and can do much. God's power fills us and lives in us, so that we can be the children of God in a dark and sin filled world.

so that we can be lights

so that we can be blameless

so that we can be children of God

Before we couldn't do anything. We were powerless and dead in our sin. Now God's power is at work through us. Now we can do everything. Rather than being an excuse for laziness, it is the best reason to get to work. To show what God has done in our life.

God is at work in our life.

His presence is with us, that is a thing of awe and fear but also of great joy and comfort. He is going to bring about his will and his pleasure in our lives, it's not going to be what we want, but that is a good thing. It is his power that energizes us and makes us children of God ready to do his will.

Amen