

# THE ONE THING NECESSARY

by Thomas Watson

---

*Thomas Watson's urgent call to work out salvation with diligence, addressing the difficulty, rarity, and possibility of salvation with practical motivation for holy labor.*

4 Chapters

# Table of Contents

1. 01 - Introduction
2. 02 - The Act
3. 03 - The Object
4. 04 - The Manner

## 01 - Introduction

---

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Php 2:12

If there be anything excellent, it is salvation; if there be anything necessary, it is working out salvation; if there be any tool to work with, it is holy fear. "Work out your salvation with fear." The words are a grave and serious exhortation, needful, not only for those Christians who lived in the apostle's time, but may fitly be calculated for the meridian of this age wherein we live.

I proceed now to the exhortation, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," which words do branch themselves into these three particulars:

First, the act, work out; secondly, the object, your own salvation; thirdly, the manner in which we should work it out, with fear and trembling. I shall speak principally of the first two, and draw in the other briefly in the application.

## 02 - The Act

---

The proposition is this: It should be a Christian's great work to be working out his salvation. The great God has put us into the world as into a vineyard, and here is the work He has set us about, the working out of salvation. There is a parallel Scripture to this: "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). When estate, friends, life cannot be made sure, let this be made sure: The original Greek signifies to study, or beat the brains about a thing. These words in the text, "work out," imply two things.

First, a shaking off spiritual sloth. Sloth is a pillow on which many have slept the sleep of death. Secondly, it implies a uniting and rallying together all the powers of our souls that we may attend the business of salvation. God has enacted a law in Paradise, that no man should eat of the tree of life, but only in the sweat of his brows.

I proceed now to the reasons enforcing this holy sweat and industry about salvation, and they are three. We must work out our salvation because of- The difficulty of this work. The rareness of it. The possibility of it.

### 1. The difficulty of this work.

It is a work that may make us labor to the going down of the sun of our life (Daniel 6:14) Now this difficulty about the work of salvation will appear four manner of ways.

First, from the nature of the work. The heart is to be changed. The heart is the very nursery of sin. It is the magazine where all the weapons of unrighteousness lie. It is a lesser hell. The heart is full of antipathy against God; it is angry with converting grace. Now that the bias of the heart should be changed, what a work is this! How should we beg of Christ, that He who turned the water into wine would turn the water, or rather poison of nature, into the wine of grace? The heart will be ready to deceive us in this work of salvation, and make us take a show of grace for grace. Many think they repent when it is not the offence, but the penalty which troubles them; not the treason, but the bloody axe. They think they repent when they shed a few tears; but though this ice begins to melt a little, it freezes again; they go on still in sin. Many weep for their unkind dealings with God, as Saul did for his unkindness to David. "He said to David, You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded you evil" (1 Samuel 24:17). "And Saul lifted up his voice and wept" (1 Samuel 24:16). But for all this he follows David again, and pursues after him (1 Samuel 26:1-25).

Secondly, men can lift up their voices and weep for sin, yet follow their sins again. Thirdly, others forsake sin, but still they retain the love of it in their hearts. Like the snake that casts off its skin, but keeps the sting, there is as much difference between false and true tears as between salt water and spring water. That which makes salvation-work hard, is, that it is a slippery work. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought" (2 John 1:8). This work falls down almost as fast as we build. An ordinary builder, when he has been at work, finds his work the next morning just as he left it; but it is not so with us. When we have been working out salvation by

prayer, fasting, meditation, and leave this work a while, we shall not find our work as we left it; a great deal of our work is fallen down again. We had need be often called upon to "Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die" (Revelation 3:2). No sooner is a Christian taken off from the fire of the sanctuary, but he is ready to cool and freeze again in security.

He is like a watch, when he has been wound up towards heaven, he does quickly unwind to earth and sin again. When the gold has been purified in the furnace, it remains pure; but it is not so with the heart. Let it be heated in an ordinance, let it be purged in the furnace of affliction, it does not remain pure, but quickly gathers soil and corruption. We are seldom long in a good frame. All this shows how difficult the work of salvation is, we must not only work, but set a watch too.

Question. But why has God made the way to heaven so hard? Why must there be this working?

Answer. To make us set a high estimate upon heavenly things. If salvation were easily come by, we should not have valued it to its worth. If diamonds were ordinary, they would be slighted; but because they are hard to come by, they are in great esteem.

2. The rareness of this work The second reason we must put forth so much holy sweat and industry about salvation is because of the rareness of this work. But few shall be saved; therefore we had need work the harder that we may be in the number of these few. The way to hell is a broad way; the highway of it is paved with riches and pleasure; it has a golden highway; therefore there are daily so many travelers in it. But the way to heaven lies outside of the road; it is an unbeaten path, and few can find it. Those who advocate universal grace say that Christ died intentionally for all; but then why are not all saved? Can Christ be frustrated of His intention? Some are so gross to aver that all shall actually be saved; but has not our Lord Christ told us, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14)? How all can go in at this gate, and yet but few find it, seems to me a contradiction.

3. The possibility of this work The third reason why we should put forth so much vigor about the work of salvation is because of the possibility of the work. Impossibility kills all endeavor. Who will take pains for that which he thinks there is no hope of ever obtaining? But "there is hope in Israel concerning this." Salvation is a thing feasible; it may be had. Oh Christians, though the gate of paradise be strait, yet the gate is open! It is shut against the devils, but it is yet open to you. Who would not crowd hard to get in? It is but paring off your sins; it is but unloading some of your thick clay; it is but assuaging the swelling humour of your pride, and you may get in at the strait gate. This possibility, no probability, of salvation may put life into your endeavor. If there be corn to be had, why should you sit starving in your sins any longer?

## 03 - The Object

---

And so I proceed to the use of exhortation, to persuade you all in the affections of Christ to set about this great work, "the working out your salvation." Beloved, here is a plot for heaven, and I would have you all in this plot; rally together all the powers of your souls; give neither God nor yourselves rest until you have "made your election sure." (2 Peter 1:10) Christians, fall to work; do it early, earnestly, incessantly.

Pursue salvation as in a holy chase; other things are but matters of convenience; salvation is a matter of necessity. You must either do the work that Christians are doing, or you must do the work that devils are doing. Oh, you that never yet took one stitch in this work of salvation, begin now. Religion is a good trade if it be well-followed. Be assured there is no salvation without working. But here I must lay down a caution to prevent mistakes.

Though we shall not be saved without working, yet not for our working. We do not work out salvation by way of merit. Bellarmine says, "We merit heaven out of worthiness." No, though we are saved in the use of means, yet by grace too (Ephesians 2:5). There must be ploughing and sowing the ground, but yet no crop can be expected without the influence of the sun; so there must be working, but no crop of salvation can be hoped for without the sunshine of free grace: "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

Give? Why, might some say, we have wrought hard for it? Ay, but heaven is a donation; though you work for it, yet it is the good pleasure of God to bestow it. Still look up to Christ's merit; it is not your sweat, but His blood that saves. That your working cannot merit salvation is clear, "It is God that works in you to will and to do" (Php 2:13). It is not your working, but God's co-working. For as the scrivener guides the child's hand, or he cannot write; so the Spirit of God must afford His auxiliary concurrence, or our work stands still. How then can any man merit by working, when it is God that helps him to work?

I shall now, having laid down this caution, resume the exhortation, and persuade you to the working out salvation. But I must first remove two objections which lie in the way.

Objection 1. You bid us work out salvation, but we have no power to work.

Answer. It is true, we have not power; I deny that we have the liberty to work. Man before conversion is purely passive; therefore the Scripture calls it a heart of stone (Ezekiel 36:26). A man by nature can no more prepare himself to his own converting than the stone can prepare itself to its own softening. But yet when God begins to draw, we may follow. Those dry bones in Ezekiel could not of themselves live, but when breath came into them, then "they lived, and stood up upon their feet" (Ezekiel 37:10).

Question. But suppose God has not dropped in a principle of grace? Suppose He has not caused breath to enter?

Answer. Yet use the means. Though you cannot work spiritually, yet work physically; do what you are able, and that for two reasons.

1. Because a man by neglecting the means, does destroy himself. It is like a man by not going to the physician, may be said to be the cause of his own death.

2. God is not wanting to us when we do what we are able. Urge the promise, "Seek and you shall find" (Matthew 7:7). Put this bond in suit by prayer; you say you have no power, but have you not a promise? Act so far as you can. Though I dare not say as the Arminian, when we do exert and put forth nature, God is bound to give grace; yet this I say, God is not wanting to those who seek his grace. No, I will say more, He denies His grace to none but those who wilfully refuse it (John 5:40).

Objection 2. The second objection is this; But to what purpose should I work? There is a decree past; if God has decreed I shall be saved, I shall be saved.

Answer. God decrees salvation in a way of working (2 Thessalonians 2:13). Origen, in his book against Celsus, observes a subtle argument of some who disputed about Fate and Destiny. One gave counsel to his sick friend not to send for the physician, because, says he, it is appointed by destiny whether you shall recover or not. If it be your destiny to recover, then you need not the physician; if it is not be your destiny, then the physician will do you no good. The like fallacy does the devil use to men; he bids them not work; if God has decreed they shall be saved, they shall be saved, and there is no need of working; if He has not decreed their salvation, then their working will do them no good; this is an argument fetched out of the devil's topics. But we say, God decrees the end in the use of means. God did decree that Israel should enter into Canaan, but first they must fight with the sons of Anak. God decreed that Hezekiah should recover from his sickness, but let him lay a fig to the boil (Isaiah 38:21). We do not argue thus in other things. A man does not say, "If God has decreed I shall have a crop this year, I shall have a crop; what need I plough, or sow, or fertilize the land?" No, he will use the means, and expect a crop. Though "the blessing of the Lord, it makes rich" (Proverbs 10:22), yet it is as true, "the hand of the diligent makes rich" (Proverbs 10:4). God's decreeing is carried on by our working. And thus having removed these objections, let me now persuade you to set about this blessed work, the working out your salvation; and that my words may the better prevail, I shall propound several arguments by way of motive to excite you to this work.

Argument 1. The first argument or motive to working, is taken from the preciousness of the soul; well may we take pains that we may secure this from danger. The soul is a divine spark kindled by the breath of God. It does out-balance the world (Matthew 16:26). If the world be the book of God, as Origen calls it, the soul is the image of God. Plato calls the soul a glass of the Trinity. It is a bright mirror in which some refracted beams of God's wisdom and holiness do shine forth; the soul is a blossom of eternity. God has made the soul capable of communion with Himself. It would bankrupt the world to give half the price of a soul. How highly did Christ value the soul when He sold Himself to buy it? Oh then, what pity is it that this excellent soul (this soul for which God called a council in heaven when he made it) should miscarry and be undone to all eternity? Who would not rather work night and day than lose such a soul? The jewel is invaluable, the loss irreparable.

Argument 2. Holy activity and industry does ennoble a Christian. The more excellent any thing is, the more active. The sun is a glorious creature, it never stands still, but is going it's circuit round

the world. Fire is the purest element, and the most active; it is ever sparkling and flaming. The angels are the most noble creatures and the most nimble; therefore they are represented by the cherubim, with their wings displayed. God Himself is (as the school men speak) a most pure act: Homer says of Agamemnon, that he did sometimes resemble Jupiter in feature, Pallas in wisdom, Mars in valor; by holy activity we resemble God who is a most pure act. The phoenix flies with a coronet on its head; the industrious Christian needs not a coronet; his sweat ennobles him; his labor is his ensign of honor. Solomon tells us that "drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags" (Proverbs 23:21). Infamy is one of the rags that hang upon him; God hates a dull temper. We read in the law, that the donkey, being a dumb creature, must not be offered up in sacrifice. Spiritual activity is a badge of honor.

Argument 3. Working out salvation is that which will make death and heaven sweet to us. It will sweeten death. He that has been hard at work all day, how quietly does he sleep at night? You who have been working out salvation all your lives, how comfortably may you lay down your head at night in the grave, upon a pillow of dust, in hopes of a glorious resurrection? This will be a deathbed cordial. It will sweeten heaven. The more pains we have taken for heaven, the sweeter will it be when we come there. It is delightful for a man to look over his work and see the fruit appear. When he has been planting trees in his orchard, or setting flowers, it is pleasant to behold and review his labors. Thus in heaven, when we shall see the fruit of our labors, "the end of your faith, even the salvation" (1 Peter 1:9), this will make heaven the sweeter. The more pains we have taken for heaven, the more welcome it will be; the more sweat, the more sweet. When a man has been sinning, the pleasure is gone, and the sting remains; but when he has been repenting, the labor is gone, and the joy remains.

Argument 4. Yet you have time to work. This text and sermon would be out of season to preach to the damned in hell. If I should bid them work, it is too late; their time is past. It is night with the devils; it is yet day with you. Work while it is day (John 9:4). If you lose your day, you lose your souls. This is the season for your souls. Now God commands, now the Spirit breathes, now ministers beseech, and as so many bells of Aaron, would chime in your souls to Christ. Oh, improve your season! This is your seed-time, now sow the seeds of faith and repentance. If when you have seasons, you lack hearts, the time may come when you have hearts and you shall lack seasons. Take time while you may; the mariner hoists up his sails while the wind blows. Never had a people a fairer gale for heaven than you of this city, and will you not set forward in your voyage? What riding is there to the term: I warrant you the lawyer will not lose his term. Oh my brethren, now is the term-time for your souls, now plead with God for mercy, or at least get Christ to plead for you. Think seriously of these things.

[Reasons to think seriously of these things]

First, our life does unravel apace. Gregory compares our life to the mariner in a ship going full sail; we are every day sailing apace to eternity.

Secondly, the seasons of grace though they are precious, are not permanent. Abused mercies will like Noah's dove, take their wings and fly from us. England's golden hour will soon run out; gospel blessings are very sweet, but very swift. "Now they are hid from your eyes" (Luke 19:42). We know not how soon the golden candlestick may be removed.

Thirdly, there is a time when the Spirit has done striving. There are certain spring tides of the Spirit, and these being neglected, possibly we may never see another tide come in. When conscience has done speaking, usually the Spirit has done striving.

Fourthly, the loss of gospel opportunities will be the hell of hell. When a sinner shall at the last day think with himself, oh, what might I have been! I might have been as rich as the angels, as rich as heaven could make me! I had a season to work in, but I lost it. This, this will be as a vulture gnawing upon him; this will enhance and accent his misery. And let this persuade you speedily to work out your salvation.

Fifthly, you may do this work and not hinder your other work; working out salvation and working in a calling are not inconsistent. And this I insert to prevent an objection. Some may say, but if I work so hard for heaven, I shall have no time for my trade. No, surely, the wise God would never make any of His commands to interfere; as He would have you "seek you first the kingdom" (Matthew 6:33), so he would have you provide for your family (1 Timothy 5:8); you may drive two trades together. I do not like those who make the church exclude the shop, who swallow up all their time in hearing, but neglect their work at home (2 Thessalonians 3:11).

They are like the lilies of the field which toil not, neither do they spin. God never sealed a warrant to idleness. He both commands and commends diligence in a calling, which may the rather encourage us to look after salvation, because this work will not take us off our other work. A man may with Caleb, follow God fully, (Numbers 14:24) and yet with David be "following the sheep great with young" (Psalms 78:71). Piety and industry may dwell together.

Sixthly, the inexcusableness of those who neglect working out their salvation. Methinks I hear God expostulating the case with men at the last day, after this manner, "Why did you not work? I gave you time to work, I gave you light to work by, I gave you My gospel, My ministers. I bestowed talents upon you to trade; I set the recompense of reward before you. Why did you not work out your salvation?" Either it must be sloth or stubbornness. Was there any work you did of greater concern? You could work in brick, but not in gold. What can you say for yourselves why the sentence should not pass? Oh, how will the sinner be left speechless at such a time, and how will this cut him to the heart to think with himself he neglected salvation, and could give no reason for it?

Seventhly, the inexpressible misery of such as do not work out salvation. Those who sleep in spring, shall beg in harvest. After death, when they look to receive a full crop of glory, they will be put to beg, as Dives, for one drop of water. Vagrant people who will not work are sent to the house of correction. Such as will not work out salvation, let them know, hell is God's house of correction that they must be sent to.

Eighthly, if all this does not prevail, consider, what it is we are working for. None will take pains for a trifle; we are working for a crown, for a throne, for a paradise, and all this is comprised in that one word, "salvation." Here is a whet-stone to industry. All men desire salvation. It is the crown of our hopes; we should not think any labor too much for this. What pains will men take for earthly crowns and scepters! And suppose all the kingdoms of the world were more illustrious than they are - their foundations of gold, their walls of pearl, their windows of sapphire - what were all this to that kingdom we are laboring for?

We may as well span the firmament as set forth this in all its splendor and magnificence. Salvation is a beautiful thing, it is as far above our thoughts as it is beyond our deserts. Oh, how should this add wings to our endeavors! The merchant will run through the intemperate zones of heat and cold for a little prize. The soldier, for a rich booty, will endure the bullet and sword, he will gladly undergo a bloody spring for a golden harvest. Oh then, how much more should we spend our holy sweat for this blessed prize of salvation!

## 04 - The Manner

---

And so, having laid down some arguments by way of motive, to persuade to this work, I shall now propound some means by way of direction to help us in this work; and here I shall show you what are those things to be removed which will hinder our working, and what are those things to be prosecuted which will further it.

1. We must remove those things which will hinder our working out salvation. There are six obstacles in the way to salvation which must be removed.

(i) First, the entanglements of the world. While the foot is in a snare, a man cannot run. The world is a snare; while our feet are in it, we cannot run the race set before us (Hebrews 12:1). If a man were to climb up a steep rock, and had weights tied to his legs, they would hinder his ascent; too many golden weights will hinder us from climbing up this steep rock that leads to salvation. While the mill of a trade is going, it makes such a noise that we can hardly hear the minister "lifting up his voice like a trumpet." The world chokes our zeal and appetite after heavenly things; the earth puts out the fire; the music of the world charms us asleep, and then we cannot work. In mines of gold there are killing damps. Oh, how many souls have been destroyed with a damp arising from the earth!

(ii) The second bar in the way to salvation is sadness and uncheerfulness: when a man's heart is sad, he is unfit to go about his work; he is like an untuned instrument. Under fears and discouragements we act but faintly in religion. David labors to chide himself out of this spiritual melancholy, "why are you cast down o my soul?" (Psalms 42:5). Cheerfulness quickens; the Lacedemonians used music in their battles to excite their spirits and make them fight more valiantly. Cheerfulness is like music to the soul, it excites to duty, it oils the wheels of the affections. Cheerfulness makes service come off with delight, and we are never carried so swift in religion as upon the wings of delight. Melancholy takes off our chariot wheels, and then we drive on heavily.

(iii) The third bar in the way to salvation is spiritual sloth. This is a great impediment to our working. It was said of Israel, "they despised the pleasant land" (Psalms 106:24); what should be the reason? Canaan was a paradise of delight, a type of heaven; but they thought it would cost them a great deal of trouble and hazard in the getting, and they would rather go without it; they despised the pleasant land. Are there not millions among us who had rather go sleeping to hell, than sweating to heaven? I have read of certain Spaniards who live near where there is great store of fish, yet are so lazy that they will not be at the pains to catch them, but buy of their neighbors. Such a sinful stupidity and sloth is upon the most, that though Christ be near them, though salvation is offered in the gospel, yet they will not work out salvation. "Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep" (Proverbs 19:15). Adam lost his rib when he was asleep; many a man loses his soul in this deep sleep.

(iv) The fourth bar in the way to salvation is an opinion of the easiness of salvation; God is merciful, and the worst come to the worst, it is but repent.

God is merciful, it is true, but withal He is just; He must not wrong His justice by showing mercy; therefore observe that clause in the proclamation, He "will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:7). If a king did proclaim that only those should be pardoned who came in and submitted to his scepter; could any, still persisting in rebellion, claim the benefit of that pardon? Oh sinner, would you have mercy, and will not disband the weapon of unrighteousness?

It is but repent. But repent? It is such a mark that we cannot hit unless God direct our arrow. Tell me, Oh sinner, is it easy for a dead man to live and walk? You are spiritually dead, and wrapped up in your winding sheet (Ephesians 2:2). Is regeneration easy? Are there no pangs in the new birth? Is self-denial easy; do you know what religion must cost, and what it may cost? It must cost you the parting with your lusts, it may cost you the parting with your life; take heed of this obstruction. Salvation is not accomplished lightly; thousands have gone to hell upon this mistake. The broad spectacles of presumption have made the strait gate seem wider than it is.

(v) The fifth bar in the way to salvation is carnal friends. It is dangerous listening to their voice. The serpent did speak in Eve. Job's wife would have caged him off from serving God, "Do you still retain your integrity?" (Job 2:9) What, still pray and weep? Here the devil did hand over a temptation to Job by his wife. Carnal friends will be calling us off from our work. What needs all this ado? Less pains will serve. We read that some of Christ's kindred, when they saw Christ so earnest in preaching, would try to stop Him: His friends "went to lay hold on Him" (Mark 3:21). Our friends and kindred would sometimes stand in our way to heaven, and judging our zeal madness, would lay hold of us and hinder us from working out our salvation. Such friends Spira met with; for advising with them whether he should revoke his former opinions concerning Luther's doctrine, or persist in them to death, they wished him to recant, and so openly abjuring his former faith, he became like a living man in hell.

(vi) The sixth bar in the way to salvation is evil company. They will take us off our work. The sweet waters lose their freshness when they run into the salt; Christians lose their freshness and savouriness among the wicked; Christ's doves will be sullied by lying among these pots. Sinful company is like the water in a smith's forge which quenches the iron be it ever so hot; such cool good affections. The wicked have the plague of the heart (1 Kings 8:38), and their breath is infectious. They will discourage us from working out our salvation; just as he who is a suitor to a woman; and is very earnest in his suit, there comes one and tells him he knows something about the woman of ill report, some impediment; the man hearing this, is presently taken off, and the suit ceases. So it is with many a man who begins to be a suitor to religion.

Sincerely he would have the match made up, and he grows very hot and violent in the suit, and begins to work out his salvation, but then there come some of his confederates, and they tell him they know something about religion that is of ill report. "This sect is everywhere spoken against." There must be so much strictness and mortification that he must never look to see good days anymore; hereupon he is discouraged, and so the match is broken off. Take heed of such people; they are devils covered with flesh; they are, as one says, like Herod, who would have killed Christ as soon as He was born. Thus, when Christ is, as it were, beginning to be formed in the heart, they would in a spiritual sense kill Him. And thus I have shown you the bars that lie in the way to

salvation, which are to be removed.

2. I proceed now in the second place to lay down some helps conducive to salvation.

(i) The first is in the text, fear and trembling. This is not a fear of doubting, but a fear of diligence. This fear is requisite in the working out of salvation. Let us fear lest we come short (Hebrews 4:1). Fear is a remedy against presumption. Hope is like the cork to the net, it keeps the soul from sinking in despair; and fear is like the lead to the net, it keeps the soul from floating in presumption. Fear is that flaming sword that turns every way to keep sin from entering. Fear quickens; it is an antidote against sloth. "Noah being moved with fear, prepared an ark" (Hebrews 11:8). The traveler, lest night should overtake him before he gets to his journey's end, spurs on the faster. Fear causes circumspection; he that walks in fear treads warily. Fear is a preservative against apostasy, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jeremiah 32:40). The fear of falling keeps us from falling. Fear is the badge and livery of a Christian. The saints of old were men fearing God (Malachi 3:16). It is reported of holy Anselm, that he spent most of his thoughts about the day of judgment. "Happy is the man that fears always" (Proverbs 28:14). Fear is a Christian's garrison, the way to be secure is always to fear. This is one of the best tools for a Christian to work with.

(ii) Secondly, another great help in working out salvation is love. Love makes the work proceed with delight; seven years labor seemed nothing to Jacob because of the love that he did bear to Rachel. Love facilitates everything. It is like wings to the bird, like wheels to the chariot, like sails to the ship; it carries the soul on swiftly and cheerfully in duty. Love is never weary. It is an excellent saying of Gregory, "Let but a man get the love of the world into his heart, and he will quickly be rich." So do but get the love of religion into your heart, and you will quickly be rich in grace. Love is a vigorous, active grace. It despises dangers; it tramples upon difficulties; like a mighty torrent it carries all before it. This is the grace which "takes heaven by violence." Get but your hearts well heated with this grace, and you will be fitted for this work.

(iii) A third thing conducive to salvation is work in the strength of Christ. "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me" (Php 4:13). Never go to work alone. Samson's strength lay in his hair. And a Christian's strength lies in Christ. When you are to do any duty, to resist any temptation, to subdue any lust, set upon it in the strength of Christ; some go out against sin in the strength of resolutions and vows, and they are soon foiled. Do as Samson; he first cried to heaven for help and then having taken hold of the pillars, he pulled down the house upon the lords of the Philistines. When we engage Christ in the work, and so take hold upon the pillar of an ordinance, we then bring down the house upon the head of our lusts.

(iv) Fourthly, work humbly, be humble, do not think to merit by your working. Satan would either keep us from working, or else he would make us proud of our working. God must pardon our works before He crowns them. If we could pray as angels, shed rivers of tears, build churches, erect hospitals, and should have a conceit that we merited by this, it would be as a dead fly in the box of perfume; it would stain and eclipse the glory of the work. Our duties, like good wine, savor of a bad cask. They are but glittering sins. Let not pride poison our holy things; when we have been working for heaven, we should say as good Nehemiah, "Remember me, O my God, concerning also, and spare me according to the greatness of Your mercy" (Nehemiah 13:22).

(v) Fifthly, work upon your knees; be much in prayer. Beg the Spirit of God to help you in the work; make that prayer, "Awake O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden" (Song of Solomon 4:16). We have need that this Spirit blow upon us, there being so many contrary winds blowing against us, and considering how soon holy affections are apt to wither. The garden has not more need of wind to make its fruit flow out, than we of the Spirit to make our graces flourish. Philip joined himself to the Eunuch's chariot (Acts 8:29). God's Spirit must join itself to our chariot; as the mariner has his hand to the helm, so he has his eye to the star. While we are working, we must look up to the Spirit. What is our preparation without the Spirit's operation? What is all our rowing without a gale from heaven? "The Spirit lifted me up" (Ezekiel 3:14).

God's Spirit must both infuse grace and excite it. We read of a "wheel in the middle of a wheel" (Ezekiel 1:16). The Spirit of God is that inner wheel that must move the wheel of our endeavors. To conclude all, pray to God to bless you in your work. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong" (Ecclesiastes 9:11), nothing prospers without a blessing; and what way to obtain it but by prayer? It is a saying of one of the ancients, The saints carry the keys of heaven at their girdle. Prayer beats the weapon out of the enemy's hand, and gets the blessing out of God's hand.

(vi) Lastly, work in hope; the apostle says, "he that plows should plow in hope" (1 Corinthians 9:10). Hope is the soul's anchor (Hebrews 6:19). Cast this anchor upon the promise and you shall never sink. Nothing more hinders us in our working than unbelief. Surely, says a Christian, I may toil all day for salvation and catch nothing. What is there "no balm in Gilead?" Is there no mercy seat? Oh, sprinkle faith in every duty! Look up to free grace; fix your eye upon the blood of Christ. Would you be saved? To your working join believing.

Amen.

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
  - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**