

Work Out Your Salvation

by John Murray

We are commanded to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, but our working is not excluded because God works, and we are wholly dependent on God's working in us.

Duration: 27:26

Scripture: Romans 11:6, Ephesians 2:8, Philippians 2:12, 2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 3:5, James 2:17, 1 Peter 1:5

Topics: "Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the idea that our working is completely dependent on God's working in us. He explains that the manifestation of God's working in us is our own working, and if we are not actively working, it means that God is not working in us. The preacher emphasizes the importance of relying on God and working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, as it is God who works within us to fulfill His good pleasure. He also highlights that it is the fact that God works in us that provides the incentive and encouragement for us to engage in good works. The sermon emphasizes the need for obedience to God's revealed will as the standard for determining what is good.

Transcript

The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians, the second chapter, at verse twelve. Philippians 2, twelve. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God which worketh in you both the will and to-do of his good pleasure. Concentrating on the words, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both the will and to-do of his good pleasure.

There can be no question, but in this text we are commanded to work in connection with the attainment of our own salvation. The words are, work out or work at your own salvation with fear and trembling. And no doubt to a great many people, this text has caused a good deal of difficulty.

Because they are well acquainted with the doctrines of salvation by grace, and by grace alone. And how can we be saved by grace if we are to work out our own salvation? How can it be when in other texts we read so plainly, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. For again, he saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was

given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

We are all very familiar with the passage in Ephesians 2.8, For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. How then in such a text as this can it be said, work out your own salvation, if in these other passages it is clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that salvation is of the Lord, and that it is entirely by grace, and not by works of righteousness? Well, the answer to that question lies in the distinction between the salvation which believers have now in possession, the salvation which they come to possess by faith, by faith alone, and the salvation that is kept in store for the children of God, the salvation to be bestowed in the future. That is to say, the distinction between salvation as we come into possession of it in this life, and salvation as it will be completed, or consummated, or perfected, the coming of Christ in glory.

The word salvation is used in these two distinct senses. When Paul says, for example, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, he is thinking particularly of that salvation into which a person comes in possession, of which a person comes into possession by faith, and which he is at present possessing. But in that very same epistle the apostles say, now is your salvation nearer than when you believed.

Now he cannot be using the word salvation there in the sense of the salvation that is already in possession, because of such he couldn't say, now is your salvation nearer than when you believed. And so he is thinking of the salvation that will be completed, that will be consummated, that will be brought to its final realization at the coming of Christ. And of that salvation he says, now is it nearer than when you believed.

Or again, when the apostle Paul in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, at this chapter, at the eighth and ninth verses, says, But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not appointed us to wrong, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. He is using the term salvation in both of these verses.

Not just the salvation that is now in possession by the believer, but the salvation that is of hope. The salvation which is now in the possession of the believer is not of hope. It's an actual possession.

But here Paul speaks of the hope of salvation, or the hope that is directed to salvation. For God has not appointed us to wrong, but to obtain salvation. That is the completion, the perfection of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And again, when the apostle Peter says, for example, He are kept by the power of God through faith and through salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. He's using the word salvation with reference to something that will be secured in the future. The salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

That is, at the last day. And likewise, when Paul says in this passage, work out your own salvation, he's not talking about that salvation into which we come into possession in this life. That salvation is by effectual calling, which is the act of God alone.

It is by regeneration. It is by union with Christ. And it is through the instrumentality of faith, but contrasted with faith.

By grace are ye saved through faith. And that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. But the salvation that is stored up for the people of God, the completion of salvation, the consummation of salvation, is

something in connection with which the people of God are not only exhorted, but commanded and required to work.

And it is just as if we should say that our own working, that is the working on the part of believers, is indispensable to their sanctification. This salvation that is reserved for the people of God as a whole, salvation complete and consummate, is something that is achieved through process, through progression, and in connection with that process, in connection with that progression, unto the attainment of glory. There is, you remember what the Apostle Paul says after this, We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Do you remember how emphatic the Apostle, the writer of the Epistle of James is when he says, Faith without works is dead? Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. And it is a distinct distortion of the doctrine of the Gospel, and a distortion that is distinctly prejudicial to the Gospel of grace, is the supposition that in connection with the salvation that is to be attained at the last day, we are to do nothing, that we are completely inactive. The great truth is this, the temptation clearly on this fact, that all the activities of our persons, all the activities of our beings are to be operated in connection with the working out of that completion of the whole salvation process.

And it is a complete heresy, nothing less than blatant heresy. So to emphasize the grace of God, that we think of sanctification as something in connection with which we are entirely satisfied. We can become heretical, not simply by blatantly denying a particular truth, but by putting truth out of focus.

And it is a heresy that is gravely prejudicial to the interest of the Gospel of God's grace. For us to think that in connection with this process of sanctification, we are just entirely inactive. If we are inactive, then we are not the partakers of a person's salvation, and we shall not be partakers of the salvation that is stored up for the people of God as their final hope.

Faith without worth is dead. We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good work. In connection with good work, there is the agency, the activity of the person concerned to the fullest extent of his energy, to the fullest extent of his will, that every fiber of his being, every energy with which he is endowed, are enlisted in the service of good work, in the service of obedience after the good pleasure of God.

Now, in order to guard this precious truth, and against misunderstanding, there are certain propositions which I am going to state. And I shall just simply state them in order. First of all, in sanctification, that is in this process of progression, that we'll find this final realization in this salvation that is stored up for the people of God.

In sanctification, our working is not excluded because God works. There's no incompatibility, there's no competition between our working and God's working in this matter of sanctification. These two are complementary, and they are not mutually excluded.

That's the first proposition, that our working is not suspended or excluded because God works. Works in us. And second, God's working is not excluded because we work.

That is to say, God's working in us, to will and to do of his good pleasure, is not excluded because we are working also. And the third proposition is this, that our working is wholly dependent upon God's working in us. That the manifestation of God's working in us is our working.

And if our working is absent, then God is not working in us. We are wholly dependent. It is, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that works within you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

And the fourth proposition is this, that it is just the fact that God works in us, to will and to do of his good pleasure, that provides the incentive and the urge and the encouragement to our working. It is just the conviction that God is working in us, just the consideration that he is working in us, that gives us encouragement, that is to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. And the fifth proposition is this, that God's grace in us, God's energy within us, by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, is that which enables us both to will and.

But the very willing itself, the very movement of the human spirit, of the human heart, of the human will, proceeds entirely from the fact that God himself is providing the energy. God is, as it were, the cause behind. Our very agency in willing as well as in doing that which is after.

And the sixth proposition is this, that this working on our part, entirely in our part, the expression which Paul uses here, and which is rendered in our version, to will and to do of his good pleasure, is in the original language simply on behalf of his good pleasure. To will and to do on behalf of, for the sake of his good pleasure. God takes delight in these good works because they proceed from an energy which he himself supplies.

How could it be otherwise that the good works of God's people would not be well-pleasing to God when he himself is, as it were, the causal agent behind them? When all the force behind them proceeds from himself? Good works done in obedience to God's commandments, out of love to him and to the end of his glory, are well-pleasing to him. And it is just, and it is not only that they are well-pleasing to him, but the norm, as it were, by which we are to determine what this working is, is that which God has revealed to us to be his good pleasure. What, after all, is the standard of human conduct? How are we to know what is good, and distinguish from what is bad? Simply and solely the revealed good pleasure of God.

We cannot devise by our own imagination. We cannot devise by our own invention what is according to God. It is just the work of obedience, as is indicated in the earlier part of this text.

Wherefore, my beloved, as we have always obeyed, obeyed what? Obeyed the revealed will of God. And we have no guarantee that anything whatsoever is well-pleasing to God, except that we have the commandment of the revealed will of God. And the final proposition that I want to make in connection with this text, this service, is that all self-confidence and presumption might seem as if we would be able to entertain a good deal of self-confidence, and even a good deal of self-confirmation, in doing those things which God has commanded us to do, because, after all, it is God working in us, so willingly do of His good pleasure.

And you know, the line of distinction between vice and virtue is not at all a wide one. The line of distinction between vice and virtue is very, very close indeed. And it is here that we need to be very careful to avoid that self-confidence, that self-congratulation, in the performance of the revealed will of God.

And we are warned against that self-confidence, that presumption, in this very text, when Paul says, with fear and trembling, with fear and trembling, because we are entirely dependent, in this matter even, of working. And we are to be constantly aware of our own helplessness, apart from there's no place. Helplessness, forced, free from helplessness, with fear and trembling, and therefore with the whole of

helplessness, is altogether, after all, of the grace of God.

It may seem contradictory, but it is the absolute truth, that it is altogether by the grace of God. The grace of God, in this case, working in us, to will and to do of His good pleasure, that we are able and great from God, and working in us, that is, working on our part, with reference to our own salvation, perfectly complement each other, and are perfectly coordinated by the grace of God, that we are able. But because it is of the grace of God, that does not eliminate the necessity for the responsibility that rests upon us, that we are to enlist every activity and energy of our being in the working out of that which will one day be the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus.

It's just in other terms the words of our Lord Himself. Without Me, ye can do nothing. But again, in the words of the Apostle, I can do all things through Christ.

My grace is sufficient for Me, and My strength is made perfect in weakness. It is just to the extent of which we realize our complete dependence upon God that we shall be most active and most determined and most conscious and most persistent in the fulfillment of this commandment, to attend to your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works you to will and to do of His good.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/0/SID0628.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-murray/work-out-your-salvation/>

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