

To be good at something it takes hard work.

Former basketball great Sen. Bill Bradley once said that during his Princeton days, his father would tell him, “Son, when you’re not out practicing, someone else is. And when you meet that person, he’s going to beat you.”

Rep. Gary Franks, *Searching for the Promised Land: An African American’s Optimistic Odyssey* (HarperCollins), quoted in Reader’s Digest, August, 1996, p. 147¹

When a lady once asked Turner, the celebrated English painter, what his secret was, he replied, “I have no secret, madam, but hard work.”²

Phil 2:12-18

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.

17 Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18 For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

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;

Earlier in the chapter Paul said Jesus was humble.

Paul was writing this letter from jail, and he wanted the church to know

- He was encouraged in their faithfulness
- We are to exemplify Christ in all situations.

Satan like to strike when you’re tired, but he’s always willing to strike when you’re alert as well.

That’s why being in the word and in fellowship is important.

¹ Galaxie Software (2002) [10,000 Sermon Illustrations](#). Biblical Studies Press.

² Foster, E. (2020) [“Labor, Result Of,”](#) in *New Cyclopaedia of Prose Illustrations*. WORDsearch.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul said something simple yet profound.

Rom 16:19

19 For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.

The Philippians were steady in the presence and outside of the presence of Paul.

Paul continued:

work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

The natural mind set of working out your own salvation with fear and trembling

- Leads us to think we are to be saved by works

What is the typical response from a non-believer if you ask him if he's saved.

- He says, well, I'm a good person.

Notice that Paul does not say to work on your salvation,

- he says to work out your salvation.
- God has to work in you before you can work out

“work out” is actually one Greek word, it means to work on to the finish.

The point is to not go halfway into salvation.

Paul is addressing believers, not unbelievers.

- He addresses them as “my beloved.”

Working out our salvation is doing the things

- we ought to be doing.
- It's demonstrating God's love to others.

2 Peter 1:3-7

3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

God has equipped us the necessary tools to live the godly life.

- But it's up to us to use those tools.

Peter echoes that:

3

5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

We have to work when we become a believer.

- You don't work on the other person's salvation,
- you can't save anyone.
- You can lead a horse to water but can't make him drink.

In 2 Cor 10 people were boasting amongst themselves about themselves.

2 Cor 10:12

12 For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

Those comparing themselves are not wise!

In the book of John, Jesus restored Peter and asked him 3 times "do you love me?"

Jn 21:

Jesus told Peter what was going to happen to him when he's old.

- He'd be carried off to a place he wouldn't want to go.

Then Peter saw John and said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?"

Jesus said, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."

Follow Him, that's the only thing you can control.

- Others need to work out their own salvation.

Work out your salvation with "fear and trembling."

- a reverent fear.

This phrase is unique to Paul's writings. Cor 2:3 "I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling."

2nd Cor 7:15

"And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him."

Our fear of the Lord should be a healthy fear of offending God.

"Trembling" can also refer to a shaking due to weakness,

- that weakness should bring a dependency on God.

In Romans 12:1-2 Paul said that it is our reasonable service to be obedient and to submit to the Lord.

Psalm 2:11

11 Serve the Lord with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.

Phil 2:13

13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Works - *energéœ*; - English word “energy”

- “to be at work, to be effective”

When you have a desire in you to get involved in ministry,

- that didn’t come from you, that came from the Lord.

Romans 7 says that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells. Everything good is from God.

Phil 2:14-18

14 Do all things without complaining and disputing, (why?) 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,

We love to quote Rom 8:28,

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God,

But do we like this one? “Do all things without complaining and disputing” suddenly “all things” takes on a different meaning.

Paul goes from telling the Philippians what to do in verse 12,

- to telling them how to do it in verse 14.

One is action, the other is attitude.

If we perform a task set before us thus taking action, that’s good.

- But if our attitude stinks when doing the action,
- the Lord will not bless that.

Peter said to be hospitable to one another without grumbling. (Same thing as complaining)

This word “complain” is to murmur, too complain under your breath.

Phil 4:11-13

11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

We can rejoice in the midst of circumstances.

Paul says in our study in verse 14 to do all things without complaining, he also says to do it without disputing.

Disputing is voicing your complaint to others.

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,

Be blameless (without fault) and harmless.

When people learn you're a Christian they expect perfection.

- Why, because they know who the perfect one is.

Therefore, they expect the same from you,

- especially since they are not perfect.

That's their way of justifying their imperfection when they see the imperfect you.

It's good to let people know that you're a Christian,

- but it's more important that you live the life of a Christian.
- That's part of working out our salvation.

Paul referred to the people of the time as a crooked and perverse generation.

“crooked” is derived from the Greek word “skoliós”

We get the word scoliosis from this word which is a bending of the spine.

The world we live in is bent on evil,

As believers we are to walk the straight and narrow

- lest we too become crooked

Acts 2:40 says to be saved from this perverse generation.

So, not only do we live in a crooked generation but it's also perverse.

This word is similar to the word corrupt

- in that it means to twist throughout
- to turn away or to mislead.

In Luke 23

- Jesus is accused of perverting the nation
- and forbidding them to pay taxes to Caesar.

We see it again in Acts 13

- where Elymas the sorcerer was
- seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

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.

To hold fast is to have hold upon.

“holding fast” contains two thoughts: holding fast and holding forth.

In the previous verse Paul said we are to shine as lights in the world.

We are to be steady, to hold fast, not wavering.

The same word was used of Jesus:

Luke 22:63

63 Now the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him.

Heb 10:23

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

So those two verses are examples of holding or being held.

What is Paul saying we are to hold on to?

- The Word of life, the bible is our life source,

Paul said something similar in Gal 2:2 as here in Philippians, he preached the gospel because he wanted to know that he didn't run in vain.

In Gal 5:7 Paul tells them, “You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?”

What stumbled you, what got in your way!

- Run your race will

How are people going to know it's Jesus that changed you unless you tell them.

Rom 10:14

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

There is no such thing as a secret agent Christian.

John 4:27

27 And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?" 28 The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, 29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" 30 Then they went out of the city and came to Him.

- They wondered why Jesus would waste time talking with,
- of all people, this Samaritan woman.

Look at the question they wanted to ask Jesus,

- but didn't: "Why are you talking with her?" (v. 27).

We have no idea who will respond to the gospel.

- The gospel doesn't discriminate.

Notice the contrast between the disciples' reaction to this conversation

- and the woman's reaction.

She didn't stop to think about

- who would listen to her or
- who she thought might respond to the gospel.

She ran back into town so quickly that she left her water jar at the well.

- The urgency of the gospel is a message of life and death

17 Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18 For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

- Paul wants us to see suffering and sacrifice as worship to God.

Paul was thinking he might have to pour his whole life out and be killed.

John 15:13

13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Paul wrote this letter from jail.

When he wrote his last letter, 2nd Tim he said,

2 Tim 4:6

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

The word study dictionary says that serving is used of the ministry of the Christian teacher in bringing men to the faith.

Paul is saying,

- that our light shining,
- our sharing of faith,
- all of the things we do for the furtherance of the gospel,
- it's all part of our worship to God.