

A LASTING RESOLUTION

Philippians 2:12-13

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Note: The following are the notes used in preaching this message. This is not a complete, word-for-word transcription of what was preached. These notes serve as a companion to the complete message, which is available by listening to the audio version. Bible quotes are primarily from ESV.

Philippians 2:12-13 is our passage to consider this morning.

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” – Philippians 2:12-13, ESV

This may be a familiar passage to some of you. It’s a passage that fits well with today – the last day of 2017. As we head into the New Year, many of you are making resolutions. Even if you’re like me – not a fan of official resolutions – it’s still a new year – a time to start over – a time to re-evaluate what we’re going to do differently for the upcoming year.

I believe a proper understanding of this passage will inform what each of us sets out to accomplish in 2018. What does it tell us to do? It commands us all to work out – to cultivate – our salvation. It is not a call to *come* to salvation; it’s a call to *work it out* – to press forward – to produce God-honoring fruit in your life. It’s a command, not a suggestion. So the command in this verse may not be one of your formal resolutions, but you must be resolved to do it, year after year, for it is a lasting resolution.

This passage breaks down quite nicely. In Philippians 2:12, after commending the Philippians’ past obedience, we see his command to obey, “work out your salvation.” Then Philippians 2:13 shows us how we are *able* to obey, saying, “...for it is God who is at work in you...” so, in a sense, obedience is confirmed.

I. OBEDIENCE COMMENDED

Let’s start with looking at how the Philippians’ obedience was commended. If you look at your Bible, in Philippians 2:12 it starts with, “Therefore...” or if you have the NASB it reads, “So then.” This transitional word(s) connects the previous context to the command that’s about to be given. But prior to the command Paul gives two parenthetical statements: “my beloved,” and, “just as you’ve always obeyed.” I’d like to first pluck out those two phrases and highlight them briefly before we deal with the “Therefore.”

While these two phrases would not need to be highlighted to the Philippians (they know Paul loves them and they know they’ve been living a pattern of obedience), they do, however, need to be highlighted and explained to us in order for us to properly and effectively apply this passage today. Perhaps a helpful way to combine those statements in one sentence is, “This letter (Philippians) is written from a loving under shepherd to faithful sheep.”

A. From a loving undershepherd

It’s important to note that Paul, the undershepherd, loves the Philippians! This book, and specifically these verses (Philippians 2:12-13) are not coming from a harsh dictator; they’re not coming from a drill sergeant saying, “Quit slacking! Drop and give me 20!” Rather, they come from a loving pastor who has been a huge influence on these people’s lives.

I was talking to a woman recently who has had a regular habit (although not perfect) of reading her Bible every day for the last 18 years. How did this habit start? When her youth pastor *lovingly* exhorted her to do so. I believe this passage carries that kind of loving tone. This is a loving under shepherd who has the ear of his sheep. How do we know Paul’s letter (and command before us) will be heard with a loving tone?

1. Because Paul called them “my beloved” (Philippians 2:2:12)

This is not a throw-away phrase used by Paul. Paul genuinely loved the Philippians. He had names and faces in his mind when he wrote.

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2. Because they partnered with him in the past (Philippians 1:7)
"It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel." – Philippians 1:7 ESV
"Partakers with me of grace... in my imprisonment..." – Philippians 4:15 tells us that when Paul was in prison "...no other church..." supported him except for the Philippian church. *"Partakers with me of grace..."* "...in the defense of the gospel..." – Paul is saying here that they linked arms with him in ministry and therefore he has a special place for them in his heart.
 3. Because Paul yearns for them (Philippians 1:8)
"For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus." – Philippians 1:8 ESV
The word for affections here is "bowels", which is how the KJV translates it, making it sound very odd – "I long for you with my bowels." We don't speak like that, of course. What Paul was doing was using the most tender, compassionate expression he could find to describe his love for them.

B. To faithful sheep

What I mean by "faithful sheep" is *faithful believers*. This is important. Paul is writing to genuine Christians – that is clear from the very beginning of the letter.

First, we must answer the question, "What is a believer/Christian?"

A Christian is someone who has personal relationship with Jesus Christ, not someone who "knows about" Christ. Someone is not a Christian because they identify as one (like when people call themselves Christians just because they need check a box, as if they say, "Well I'm not an atheist, and I'm not a Mormon, so I guess I'm a Christian." A Christian is someone who knows and embraces the gospel. A Christian is someone who: (1) recognizes that they are accountable to a holy God. God can be clearly seen in creation – Romans 1 says it's plain to every single person and nobody is without excuse. (2) A Christian also freely acknowledges that they are sinners. They are sinners who not only *do* bad things but whose lives don't measure up to God's perfect standard. They confess that they *commit* certain sins and also *omit* the good they ought to be doing. They know they stand before God 100% guilty – and the wages of their sin is death. However, and this is the good news of the gospel, a Christian understands that (3) God made a way to be reconciled to him through Jesus Christ – through his life, death and resurrection. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says *"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* Then, in response to that truth, by grace, through faith, a genuine Christian – a genuine follower of Christ will (4) cast themselves on God and His work in Christ. They repent with repentance *toward* God, turning to him for salvation outside of themselves. Confessing with their mouth that Jesus is Lord of their life, and believing in their heart that God raised Him from the dead. And their walk matches their talk.

If that describes you – if you are a Christian in *that* sense – then this passage is written to you. If that is not you, then I invite you to pay attention to what could be yours if you turn and follow Christ.

How do we know the Philippian believers were faithful? Because Philippians 2:12 says *"...just as you have always obeyed..."*

Here is where Paul commends their obedience. What are some examples of past obedience? Acts 16 tells us that Paul and his companions traveled to Philippi and stayed there many days. If you remember, there weren't enough men in the church to have a synagogue, so Paul went outside the city gate to a riverside and there found women gathered for a prayer meeting. They taught the women – no men around – and the Lord started opening their hearts to receive the gospel (starting with Lydia, the seller of purple goods). Paul and Silas were soon thrown into prison, and miraculously escaped through an earthquake, but not before the jailer was converted, along with his household. So when you read Acts 16, and every other place the city and people of Philippi are mentioned, you get the sense that they received the gospel willingly.

Another example of past obedience can be found in 2 Corinthians 8 where we're told that the

Philippians selflessly gave money to Paul beyond their means. And it says that they gave themselves first to the Lord, and then to Paul and the other missionaries.

How else do we know they were faithful? Because they had qualified leaders (Philippians 1:1) Philippians 1:1 ESV – *“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons.”*

As you know, from Pastor Kent’s recent sermon series through 1 Timothy, Paul outlines strict qualifications for elders (or overseers) and deacons. Here we see Paul is writing this letter to all the saints (that is, the entire gathering of believers in the church that meets in Philippi), but note that he specifically addresses the overseers and deacons. The church in Philippi had faithful, mature believers, exercising their gifts in an organized, Biblical church.

It is important to note that this letter is written to what today we would call “strong, mature believers.” Paul is not writing to the Corinthians. He’s not writing to the Galatians. He’s not calling unbelievers to salvation. He’s writing to faithful believers who are already in Christ. Why does that matter? Hang on to this and it will help you apply the command that is given in the latter part of Philippians 2:12.

II. OBEDIENCE COMMANDED

This is where we move into the heart of our text – the command that is given to the Philippians, and subsequently, to all believers. Now let’s give our attention to Philippians 2:12 *without* the parenthetical statements: *“Therefore, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”*

A. The appeal: *Therefore*

Now I want to draw your attention to the word “therefore.” Paul had given them a command in Philippians 2:5 saying, *“Have this mind in yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...”* or as the NASB puts it *“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.”*

So, Paul is calling them (and us) to meditate on – to fill their minds with – the work of Christ. What aspect, specifically?

1. We must meditate on the *humility* of Christ

Philippians 2:6 Although Jesus was in the form of God, although He was equal to God, He resolved to completely surrender His sovereign right to *be* served in order to *serve*. How did he do that? Philippians 2:7, He made Himself nothing (or “he emptied himself” as the NASB states it) which means he set aside His divine privileges and heavenly glory and became a slave – voluntarily. He became a man and all that entails. Then in Philippians 2:8 we read that he humbled himself – voluntarily. Then this is key, *he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death*. The phrase “to the point of death” shows the extent, or the scope, of his obedience. He obeyed until the very end. Did you catch that? We, as sinful humans who are a part of the curse of sin, must die. Christ, who didn’t have a sin nature, didn’t need to die. He voluntarily became obedient to the point of death. In Philippians 2:8b the method of the death (the cross) is drawn out to really drive home the humility of Christ. This was seen as a curse. It was excruciating and embarrassing. But Christ was humble and obedient to the end.

Peter put it this way, 1 Peter 2:21-23 ESV *“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”* Jesus Christ is our perfect example of what it looks like to be humbly obedient until our very last breath.

Have you ever meditated on this? Aren’t you thankful that Jesus never said, “That’s close enough – I’m going to die in a few days anyways?”

2. We must meditate on the *exaltation* of Christ

We read then in Philippians 2:9 that God the Father exalted Christ and gave Him a name greater than any other name. In His crucifixion, Jesus' name was ridiculed. In His resurrection and exaltation, Jesus was given a name that is above every other name. One commentator stated this, "The exaltation of Christ was due to His total submission to the will of the Father, *not just because He was God*. Christ Himself said: "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."¹ To be sure, Christ is sitting on a throne that you and I will NEVER sit on. Yet we see that it was the Father's will to reward Christ's humble obedience with exaltation. We too, as believers, can expect exaltation in the end. That's what Jesus Himself said in Matthew 23:12.

Again, to quote the Apostle Peter, 1 Peter 5:6, 10 ESV "*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you... And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*" Why? What's the ultimate goal of this exaltation? To make much of you? No. Philippians 2:10-11 ESV "*so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"

Christ's work of redemption does not find its ultimate end in you. The work of redemption does indeed save lost souls and keep them from hell – that's true, but that's not all it does – our salvation finds its ultimate purpose in the glory of God. God the Father is glorified when we are exalted, in heaven, forever worshipping Him because of His kindness He showed us in Christ. "Therefore," Paul says, "Since your mind is fixed on the example of Christ's humility and exaltation that was on display in your redemption – since your mind is fixed on Christ's obedience to the end – you must follow his perfect pattern. Here's how:

B. The command: *work out your salvation!*

The Greek word for "work out" (katargozomi) means: to perform or accomplish something. It carries the idea of working something out to its full completion. The Greek word is present tense = keep working (it's ongoing). It's in the middle voice = *you* must do it for yourself (nobody will do it for you). It's an imperative = a command you must obey (not simply "a good idea"). I'm not suggesting this as a new-year's resolution as my opinion. Rather, this is non-negotiable New-Year's resolution.

Also, note the importance of the preposition (at least it's a preposition as it's translated in English). It does NOT say work *FOR* your salvation. It does NOT say work *UP* your salvation. It says work *OUT* your salvation. Remember, Paul is speaking to believers. He called them saints in Philippians 1:1. We've already talked about their faithfulness. To say, or infer, that Paul means that we are working to *earn* our salvation is to grossly misunderstand Paul, for that would make this command fly in the face of nearly every book of the Bible.

What does it mean to work out your salvation? God has already given salvation, and Paul is saying to work it out – to cultivate it – this is referred to elsewhere in Scripture as your sanctification (progressive). Paul is talking about how to respond in obedience to the salvation that is already ours in Christ

"Salvation does not take place over our heads, as if somehow or another God took care of all the business for us and every so often He informs us of how well it is going. Some people think of it in those terms, and they get themselves in dreadful difficulty. ...the grace of God doesn't destroy our individual responsibility as Christians – the grace of God doesn't say, 'Now you don't need to be obedient,' but rather the grace of God makes it possible for the obedience to which we have been called to become a reality in our lives." – Alistair Begg

One way to illustrate this, although not perfectly, is to think about marriage. After the marriage ceremony, it's done. You're married. You made a covenant. Is there anything left to do? Check the box, move on? No! It would be absurd for you to ignore your wife and not cultivate your marriage. We

must cultivate our marriage – cultivate our relationship – forever! If you don't, your marriage will suffer. So, just as it is with your marriage, you must cultivate your salvation. It is an ongoing process that needs your attention. Unfortunately, we don't naturally give our attention to our salvation. In our sinfulness, we are *naturally* drawn to earthly things.

So what gets your attention instead? What are you cultivating? Your career? Your health? Your hobby? Your house? Your social media account? Those aren't necessarily bad, but if you can't honestly say that you are cultivating your salvation then that's a problem. Re-evaluate your priorities. Work out your own salvation. Remember, this is something that *you* must do. It requires work, it requires time, it requires forethought.

Think about this simple verse, 2 Timothy 2:7 ESV – *“Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.”* You think it over... God will give you understanding. God will not give you insight into His Word if you never read it. God will not strengthen your walk if you never meditate on spiritual things. God will not give you wisdom while you are sleeping. God will not reveal His good and perfect will through Instagram, through PS4, NFL, etc.

What if, by God's grace, you *are* actually cultivating your salvation? What if you *are* in the Word, you have a regular reading plan, you're involved in Bible Studies, you meditate on Scripture, you're walking by the Spirit, etc.? To you I would say, remember to whom this letter was written. To whom was it written? Believers, yes, but Paul also named the faithful overseers and deacons (the leaders). If anyone deserves a break, it's these guys! But Paul doesn't tell them to, “Hit cruise control, you've arrived.” He tells them to work until the end, like Christ.

One of the dangers of faithful ministry is feeling like we've “arrived.” You can begin to think, “If anyone deserves to coast right now, it's me.” Those who are older in the faith are perhaps most susceptible to this. Peter said in 2 Peter 1:5-8 ESV *“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue... knowledge, ... self-control, ... steadfastness, ... godliness, ... brotherly affection, and ... love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

So this is a call for *progression* in your faith, not a call to a particular status, position or rank.

C. The time: *not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence*

Paul is telling his disciples, if you will, that it's obvious that you're going to work hard when I'm with you. We understand that, right? When you're under the direct influence of a mentor – and in the case of the Philippians, the most brilliant spiritual mind to walk the earth besides Jesus – you will cultivate your salvation. You'll work hard. That's a given. But Paul has a greater concern: Paul does not want their spiritual progress to be dependent on someone else. They must work hard when he's absent. They need *God* to grow in their spiritual maturity (we'll see that in Philippians 2:13) but they do not need *Paul*.

Let's pause on this for a minute. What does this mean in your life? It's Sunday, I'm glad you're here, but the Holy Spirit is speaking to you in this passage saying you must work out your salvation Monday through Saturday. That means:

When you get home from work, work out your salvation

When you go away to school, work out your salvation

When you go on vacation, work out your salvation

When your spouse, kids or roommates leave the home, or they all go to bed, and you're alone...work out your salvation

It's easy to look like a saint in your Community Group. It's easy to look like a saint on a retreat. You must work out our salvation when nobody is looking!

D. The manner: *with fear and trembling*

Here we move to the manner in which we are to work out our salvation: *with fear and trembling*. What does “fear and trembling” mean? Let me see if I can illustrate this. About 20 years ago my youth Pastor, Doug Stohlhand pulled me aside during a mission trip to Mexicali and said he needed to speak with me about something important. I thought he was going to ask me to give my testimony or something. Instead, he asked me to give the sermon on Sunday! I went back to my tent and cried. Why did I cry? I was 14 years old and felt totally inadequate. I gave that sermon with fear and trembling! Not because I was afraid to speak to people (because I could’ve easily have given my testimony), but because I understood the weightiness of the task and my own insufficiency.

Again, what does it mean to work out your salvation with fear and trembling? It means we are to work out our salvation with humility of soul. When we understand our own insufficiency and sinfulness, we will work out our salvation with full understanding that we are nothing without God. We have nothing to offer. And that brings us right into the next verse, when Paul confirms that obedience will happen through the strength that God provides.

III. OBEDIENCE CONFIRMED

[*work out your salvation*], “*for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*” We are commanded to work out our salvation – that is true – but we are utterly dependent on God to do so.

A. God is working now

The word “for” gives a reason for the command: man must work because God works, and that’s the way it works! Philippians 1:6 ESV – “*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*” God started it and you can bet He’ll finish it.

The Greek word for “works” is *energeo*, from which we get our word *energy*. You could literally read this as “For God is the one who energizes you.” This is the fulfillment of the new covenant in Ezekiel 36 – He puts His Spirit within you to *cause* you to walk in His statutes. You work *out* your salvation; God works *in* you. It’s a play on words (only in Greek the in/out are prefixes, so it could also be read “you out-work your salvation for God in-works”).

I recently built a fort in my backyard with my two boys. My oldest was three years old at the time and he “helped” me build it. It was great, I poured the concrete out of the bag while he put his hands on the bag. I placed my hand over his on the hammer and pounded in the nail. And I smile when he goes around saying, “*We* built a fort.” We all know who did the actual building. I literally did everything...but so did he! That illustration isn’t perfect but it illustrates this point: God is the one who energizes you to work out your salvation! You don’t do it on your own, and neither does He! While you work on your outward conduct, God works on your inward character – they go hand-in-hand. It’s not one or the other. It’s not a scale where you do some, then give God a turn, then it’s your turn again...they happen simultaneously. For example, when you consider others better than yourself, God makes you a loving person. When you give thanks in all circumstances, God gives you joy. When you confess your sins, God gives you peace.

“Works” is in the present tense, meaning God is doing it now (not just once at salvation). “Well,” you say, “If God is doing it now, does it really matter if I work? Won’t He get the desired result anyway?” Think like a parent for a minute. When your kids are in the home you are diligently working to teach and train them. When your kids are obedient, do you stop training? No. Training, in those times, is a wonderful time and you enjoy great fellowship with your kids. What about when they are not obedient? Do you stop training? No, but your training then comes in the form of discipline. You are commanded to obey – to work out your salvation – for God is at work in you. He is training your character. If you don’t do what he commands, He will continue to work in you, only now through the form of loving discipline. Hebrews 12 also highlights that truth.

B. God is working in your whole person

He does this through the Holy Spirit (this needs to be said, of course). Jesus said in Acts 1:8 ESV – “... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...” He is not content just to indwell you, but to give you the power to live a righteous life, fully pleasing to God. Left unto yourself, you cannot obey. With Christ, through the Holy Spirit, not only is it possible to obey, but God is actively working to make sure it happens.

Paul said in 1Thessalonians 5:23-24 ESV – “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”

Surely God is not interested in conforming just your mind...not just your will...not just your emotions or affections. He wants to conform ALL of you – the way you think, what you desire to do, and your deep, heart-felt concerns of life.

C. God is working with a purpose

The phrase in Philippians 2:13, “...to will and to work...” shows God’s purpose in you. What is it? God’s purpose is to change you from the inside out. That is not just a cute way to say it – Philippians 2:13 says that. He starts on the inside and then moves to the outside. By God’s grace, He begins to change what you *want* to do (that’s your internal will) and He gives you the power to do it (that’s the external work that results).

Both verbs (will and work) are present tense, which tells us that God is at work in you, moment by moment, changing your will and giving you the power to do what pleases Him. Let’s be clear: God doesn’t force anyone to do His will. Think about that in regards to your own salvation. Why did you stop swearing when you became a Christian? Because “it’s against the rules?” No, because you didn’t *want* to do that any more. Your desire changed, leading to a change in actions. Why did you stop cheating on your taxes, stop sleeping around, stop your constant whining and complaining, stop spending all your money on yourself? Same reason...because God changes your desire – your will – leading to a change in actions. And God doesn’t just do it all at once, either. Every season of life brings a new conviction. God chisels away at our character throughout our entire life until we are conformed into the image of Christ.

D. God is working with a goal (for His good pleasure)

God is working in you for His glory. He is aiming at a target and He will hit it. Consider Ephesians 1. The first 14 verses of this chapter are chalked full of the things that God has graciously done through Christ for those who are His. Ephesians 1:3 sets that up – it’s somewhat of a heading. Now, let me just quickly point out some of the things He’s done, then I’ll point out *why* He has done these things.

Ephesians 1:4 says He chose us before time began – saying, “that one is mine. I’ll make him/her holy and blameless.”

Ephesians 1:5 says He determined that we would be one of the ones He was going to adopt into His family.

Ephesians 1:7 says He redeemed us through Christ’s blood He shed on the cross, and He forgave us of our sins.

Ephesians 1:11 says we have obtained an inheritance. We’re not a third wheel in the family, we’re not an outside dog that stands on the back porch and stares into the house, wishing we were at the table. We have a seat at the table as the heir of the estate. We are co-heirs with Christ.

Ephesians 1:13 says we were sealed with the Holy Spirit, the guarantee of our inheritance.

Why has God done these things? This passage tells you:

Ephesians 1:5 (starting at the end of the verse) it was according to the purpose of His will, “...to the praise of His glorious grace.”

Ephesians 1:12 says so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be “...to the praise of his glory.”

Ephesians 1:13, the end of the section, wraps it up by saying that we were saved and sealed “...to the praise of his glory.”

In other words, what is God’s goal in you? His goal in you is to bring honor and praise to His great name. He does that (now using the language of Philippians 2:13) by working in you, both to will and to work, “for His good pleasure.”

So as we look back now on Philippians 2:12-13 and attempt to put them together, I want to point out three errors. Check yourself to see if you fall in any of these categories:

1. Error #1 – The Philippians 2:12-only crowd. Those who fall into this error say that we must work out our salvation *in our own strength*. Now you may be a good, informed Christian and therefore wouldn’t use words like this, but functionally this is how you are living. “I must try harder – I must do good in order to be good” – this is what we call “works-based righteousness,” meaning, I must win God’s favor.

If this is you, and you feel like you’re pretty good (or at least better than the next guy) I’d encourage you to meditate on the manner of which we are to work (with fear and trembling). Meditate on this: Jesus is the vine and you are the branch; apart from Him you can do nothing. If this is you, and you’re feeling burdened and discouraged, then know that there is hope! Meditate on Philippians 2:13 and the work that God promises to do for you.

2. Error #2 – The Philippians 2:13-only crowd. This is the “Let go and let God” crowd. Frankly, there are a lot of hard-working men in this crowd: they work hard at their job, they provide for their family, but work out your salvation? That’s God’s job when I show up on Sundays. These people don’t make any effort on their own yet think that they will become more like Christ.

If this is you, I’d encourage you to meditate on Philippians 2:5-11 and ask yourself, “Is this my attitude? Am I following Christ’s example of obedience?”

3. Error #3 – The 50-50 crowd. This is where you find people giving a half-hearted effort. They work, but not hard, for they say “well God’s the one that is going to have to do the rest.” This isn’t correct either. Philippians 2:12-13 are not a scale that we must balance. It’s both/and. 100% effort by you and 100% effort by God. Luke-warm Christians are disobedient Christians.

How thankful are you that we serve a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love! Repent and return to your loving Father who will graciously embrace you and forgive you!

In closing, let me help you begin to think through practical ways you can work out your salvation in 2018. Let me start by encouraging you to take just one step. I’m going to mention some ideas, go after just one or two. You aren’t earning your salvation – you aren’t earning God’s favor – you’re *progressing* in your faith.

1. Are you bothered/convicted about your lack of knowledge about God and His word? Rather than saying “I’ll read the Bible more,” be specific. What are you going to read? When? Where will you go? What Bible will you use? How long will you read? Where will you note what you’re learning? Who will you tell about it? Who will keep you accountable?
2. Are you lacking in your prayer life? Rather than saying “I’ll pray more,” be specific. What will you pray for? When? Where will you pray? For how long? – Ask your wife, kids, friends, etc. how you can pray for them. Write it down. It’s going to take work.
3. Are you convicted about your church-life? It could be your consistency, your service to the body, your attitude and preparation for Sundays? What will you do to take the next steps in this area? What does God’s Word say about it? Go find out! Ask for help.
4. Are you feeling like God is telling you to put off a certain sin? Ok, what will you put on in its place? What passage of Scripture can you memorize? When will you review that verse? Who will keep you accountable?

Make a specific plan for this year. Work out your salvation, for God is at work in you!

ⁱ Dr. Robert Gromacki, *Stand United in Joy: An Exposition of Philippians* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2002), 100.