

## What does it mean to 'work out your own salvation?'

Written by Josh Winslett

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**Philippians 2:12** *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye 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 which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

Before we look at this verse it is good to remind the reader that Paul is writing to a church, not unregenerate individuals, and has already defined these people as heaven bound. (Philippians 1:6) Paul never questioned their salvation.

With that said, let us move on to the verses. These verses can create confusion if not rightly divided. To fully understand verse 12 we have to see it in the context with verse 13. Notice what verse 13 states; *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."*

### **Ephesians 2:1**

tells us that at one time we were dead in trespasses and sins. If we were dead then we had no ability to work anything spiritual. It first takes God's work on and in us before we can work.

That's why Paul states, "

*For it is God.*

" He puts God's working as a prerequisite before we can work. God's inward working produces the want to do his work.

Anytime we apply works as a cause of salvation we add to the scriptures. **Romans 11:6**, *"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."*

Furthermore, Paul does not tell us to work for salvation. He tells us to work out our own salvation. Interestingly enough, Paul uses different words for "work out" in verse 12 and "worketh" in verse 13.

"Work out" comes from the Greek word *katergazomai*. *Katergazomai* means "to work fully". We can gather from that, that we are to fully cultivate our salvation. We are to completely and fully enjoy and fully occupy the blessings which God has given us in salvation. Just as we are to "work out" the muscles we already possess to strengthen them; we are to also work out our salvation, to strengthen our intimacy with Christ. *"...work out your own salvation..."*

"Worketh" comes from the Greek word *energeo*. *Energeo* is where we get our English word energy. Only from God can we have energy to serve him. Our Godly will (want) to do and the ability to serve God only comes from God. *"...For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do..."*

This passage has great significance for believers in Christ. Paul starts verse 12 telling them that they should continue to serve God in his, Paul's, absence. It seems hard to serve God when you feel to be alone and abandoned. Yet Paul gives them encouragement by reminding them that even when we perceive to be alone, God is always with us giving us energy to serve Him.

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