

WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION

Phil 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.*

Phil 2:13 *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

James Strong defines “work out” in the following manner: *κατεργάζομαι katergázomai, kat-er-gad'-zom-ahee; from G2596 and G2038; to work fully, i.e. accomplish; by implication, to finish, fashion:—cause, to (deed), perform, work (out)*. One can liken salvation to a package that contains instructions to navigate and negotiate the challenges in this world with the aim of making it to heaven. There is only one salvation accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ through his divine identity and atonement for our sins at Golgotha. “And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:9). The Lord Jesus accomplished his work of collective salvation when he died on the Cross, gave up the ghost, and said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). However, each one of us will find that the package of salvation leads us on unique paths that sometimes overlap, but often diverge. Hence, the words of the Apostle Paul, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”. In fact, much of the Bible is a compilation of individuals who worked out their own salvation, and, according to Hebrews 11:2 “obtained a good report”. Let us consider some of these individuals and the way they worked out their own salvation and be inspired.

Hebrews 11:7 *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

God promised deliverance to Noah, but Noah had to prepare an ark to the saving of his house. This was the “package of instructions”, if you will, that Noah had to work out in order to be saved. No one else but Noah was ordered to work out his salvation in this unique manner. Thank Jesus that he assigns different instructions and paths to follow in working out our own salvation! Some of you listening to this message, or reading it, come from Orthodox backgrounds, for example. I cannot begin to understand your background. This religion and its complex traditions is almost two thousand years old. God called you out of it and you are still navigating your way away from its influence towards heaven – I admire and cheer you on in your determination to work out your own salvation. Be of good courage: the Lord Jesus

Christ himself has ordered you to work out your own salvation. Paul sates, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). God made Noah the best carpenter in the world and he will give you the will and the grace to navigate towards heaven. Let us consider the salvation of another champion of the faith, Esther.

Esther 4:13 Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, *Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.*

Esther 4:14 *For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*

Esther realized that her own salvation was linked to the salvation and deliverance of all Jews in Persia. She became the female version of Noah – thousands, perhaps millions were looking to her for deliverance. This was the package of salvation that Esther, a young woman, was given by God. Once again, it was unique. We cannot decide the nature of the package of salvation we receive: whether one is a five hundred year-old Noah or a young Esther, God decides the nature and instructions on the package. Did you know that Esther was just fourteen years-old when she became Queen? Our job is to know and be assured that Jesus will work in us and gives us the will to do his will. There may be some of you here who are frustrated and complain to the Lord asking him why he gave such a difficult “package of salvation”. Look to Esther! God provided Esther with a preacher, Mordechai, who constantly sent her messages reminding her of the word of God and her heritage. Furthermore, she was backed up by the prayers and fasting of all the Jews in the Kingdom of Persia. “Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16). We are never alone in working out our own salvation – the Lord Jesus works in us and gives us the will in addition to sending preachers and brothers and sisters who will encourage, fast and pray for our success. Let us consider another great champion of the faith, Ruth.

Ruth 1:16 *And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:*

Ruth 1:17 *Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.*

Ruth understood that her package of salvation was waiting for her in Israel, not her own country Moab. There was no package of salvation to work out in Moab. God was testing

to see whether she would leave everything behind in Moab. Once she uttered these famous words in Ruth 1:16 & 17, she was given the package with its instructions. Clearly, working out our own salvation is often fraught with many difficulties. Ruth was very poor. In addition, she was a Moabite in Bethlehem – enemies of Israel. This is why her mother-in-law, Naomi, pleaded with her to stay behind in her own country. Naomi loved Ruth and did not want her to suffer pain and shame in Israel. However, Ruth knew all of this but yet persevered. In working out her own salvation, Ruth became the great grandmother of none other than King David himself. I think of some of you here who have been given a package of salvation similar to Ruth. You have had to leave your family, identity and even country in order to work out your own salvation. There were many well-meaning people who begged you not to accept the package of salvation, but you saw beyond the suffering and shame like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

May the God of Ruth bless you! May you be the ancestors of Davids! Before we conclude, however, let us explore briefly what salvation in Jesus name entails, for the sake of anyone who is not familiar with this.

1Peter 1:10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

God has been speaking about his salvation from the time Adam and Eve fell into sin. “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). The seed of sin was first found in the woman, but God planted the seed of salvation in a woman also to send a clear signal to Satan: God loves humans made in his image and will make provision for their salvation. For the next few thousand years, God kept reminding his people about his coming salvation most clearly encapsulated in Isaiah 9:6.

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

All who looked for salvation studied these scriptures day and night: this was God’s package of salvation. They began to understand that the millions of liters of animal blood was pointing to the blood of God. These rivers of blood could not wash away the stain of sin. God

designed a package of salvation that he would work out for us. However, before we talk about his package of salvation, we must understand his deity. Without his deity as the only God, his salvation would have no meaning. Let us always and forever believe that God alone has the power to save.

Hosea 13:14 *I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.*

Isaiah 12:2 *Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.*

The reason that Jesus alone has salvation is because he alone is God, and none beside him. The Jews were angry with the Lord because they heard him forgive the sins of the sick. Never before in the history of Israel did any man forgive the sins of individuals. Their anger was justified if Jesus was not God. However, the very fact that Jesus forgave sins in public, and this led to the healing of diseases, was proof positive that Jesus is God. “Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)” (Mark 2:7, 10). Hence anyone who seeks to open the package of salvation must first believe that Jesus Christ is God manifested in flesh (John 1:1, 14; I Timothy 3:16).

Isaiah 53 speaks about the details of God’s own package of salvation. He states that Jesus would carry our sins and sorrows; that he would be killed for our transgressions and not his own; that he will die with sinners but be buried with the rich and finally “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11). We know that all this was fulfilled only in the life of one person – the Lord Jesus Christ. David also prophesizes about this salvation of the Lord mentioning small details which only the Lord Jesus fulfilled on the Cross: “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Psalm 69:21). “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost” (John 19:30).

In conclusion, God was the first to craft or design a package of salvation which he would accomplish for us. He finished his project on the Cross. Now each one of us must receive his salvation and work out our own salvation. God comforts us with the knowledge that we are not alone; he works in us and give us the will to keep pushing and doing his good pleasure. When Elijah ran out of steam, God blasted the rocks around him and reminded him of his infinite power to accomplish his work. When Moses complained about his lack of

eloquence, God reminded him that he creates the tongue. No excuses! Work out your own salvation! Jesus is our greatest supporter and sponsor. Do we need anyone else? Most fascinating of all, God gave books to honor those who successfully worked out their own salvation. Joshua, Esther, Job and Ruth are a few examples.

***Mal 3:16** Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.*

***Mal 3:17** And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*

***Mal 3:18** Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.*

Continue to work out your own salvation and God has a book with your name written on it in heaven!