

*Nuggets and Gems from the Bible*

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OUR  
SALVATION

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***Living Stream Ministry***  
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# WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION

In this booklet we shall consider the matter of working out our salvation. In [Philippians 2:12](#) Paul says, “So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not only as in my presence, but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” To work out our own salvation is to carry it out, to bring it to the ultimate conclusion. We have received God’s salvation, which has as its climax to be exalted by God in glory as the Lord Jesus was ([v. 9](#)). We need to carry out this salvation, to bring it to its ultimate conclusion, by our constant and absolute obedience with fear and trembling. We have received this salvation by faith. Now we must carry it out by obedience. This includes the genuine oneness in our soul ([v. 2](#)). To receive salvation by faith is once for all; to carry it out is lifelong.

In [verse 12](#) Paul charges us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Fear is the inward motive; trembling is the outward attitude.

In [verse 13](#) Paul goes on to say, “For it is God

who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.” The word “for” at the beginning of this verse gives the reason we need to obey always. It is because God operates in us. In God’s economy we have the Lord Jesus as our pattern (vv. 6-11), as the standard of our salvation (v. 12), and we also have God operating in us both the willing and the working to carry out our salvation, to bring it to its ultimate conclusion. It is not that we by ourselves carry it out, but that God operates in us to do it. The only thing we need to do is to obey the inner operating of God. The willing Paul speaks of here is inward, whereas the working is outward.

In [verses 12, 13, 15](#), and [16](#) we have four wonderful matters: salvation (v. 12), God operating in us ([v. 13](#)), lights or luminaries ([v. 15](#)), and the word of life ([v. 16](#)). The salvation in [verse 12](#) is actually the very God who operates in us in [verse 13](#). The One who operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure is Himself our salvation. As believers, we are children of God, children of the One who is operating in us. Because we are children of God, we most assuredly have the divine life and divine nature ([2 Pet. 1:4](#)). How could a child not have the life and nature of his father? It is simply not

possible for someone to be born of a particular person and not have the life and nature of that person. In the same principle, it is not possible for us to be genuine children of God, born of Him, and not have His life and nature. We have been truly born of God and not merely adopted by Him. According to the Word of God, as true believers in Christ, we have experienced a divine birth. God has actually been born into us, and thereby we have His life and nature. We all may boast, not in our first birth, but in the second, the divine birth which made us children of God.

Because we are children of God with the life and nature of God, we shine as lights in the world. The Greek word rendered lights in [Philippians 2:15](#) means luminaries which reflect the light of the sun. Every child of God is a stone reflecting the light which comes from Christ, God's unique Son. In this universe there is only one source of light, and this source is God. As those luminaries, we also hold forth the word of life.

These four important matters are very subjective and experiential. We have received a salvation which is God Himself. Now there is operating in us this very God, the One who is real in our experience as our subjective salvation. He is not dormant, passive, or idle. His operating in us is

His energizing in us. How wonderful that we have been born of this energizing God! Hence, we have His energizing life and nature. We are the energetic children of the energizing God! Spontaneously we reflect the light which comes from God as the universal source. In the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, we shine as lights, as luminaries, in the world. Therefore, we can hold forth the word of life to those around us. This is to take Christ as our pattern and to work out our salvation.

If the believers in Philippi worked out their salvation in this way, they would make Paul very happy. If all the saints in all the churches would work out their salvation according to the items in these verses, all those who serve the churches, the apostles and elders, would be happy. To work out our salvation is to have the genuine experience of Christ and enjoyment of Christ.

## **HAVING RECEIVED SALVATION OF THE HIGHEST STANDARD**

In [Ephesians 2:5](#) Paul says that we have been saved by grace. In [Ephesians 2:8](#) he declares, “By grace you have been saved through faith.” It is absolutely true that we are saved only by grace through faith. Without grace it is not possible

for us to be saved. According to [Ephesians 2](#), God's salvation brings us into the heavens. This indicates that we have received a salvation with the highest possible standard. We have been saved by grace to be in the heavenlies with Christ ([Eph. 2:6](#)).

Although we are saved from sin, [Ephesians 2](#) indicates that we are also saved from death, for we have been enlivened by God, raised with Christ, and seated with Him in the third heaven. My emphasis in this booklet is not on the fact that we are saved by grace. It is on the extent and standard of God's salvation. We have been saved by God's grace to be with Christ in the heavenlies.

## THE NEED TO WORK OUT THIS SALVATION

In [Philippians 2:12](#) Paul tells us explicitly to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. To receive salvation is one thing, and to work it out is another thing. To work out salvation is not to accomplish salvation. Rather, it is to carry out through continual obedience the salvation we have received.

Paul's word about obedience in [verse 12](#) answers to what he has previously said about

Christ becoming obedient ([v. 8](#)). A very striking aspect of Christ as our pattern is His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. As God, Christ first took the major step of emptying Himself, of laying aside the expression of His deity. Then, having emptied Himself and having taken the form of a man, He humbled Himself. This self-humbling is particularly related to obedience. The Bible underscores the importance of obedience. For example, in [1 Samuel 15:22](#) we are told that to obey is better than sacrifice. We who have received Christ as the pattern of our salvation must learn always to obey with fear and trembling. Within we should have fear as the motive, and without we should have trembling as our attitude, an indication that we have no confidence in ourselves.

## GOD OPERATING IN US

According to [Philippians 2:13](#), God is operating in us. Our salvation is not merely an action; it is a living Person, the Triune God Himself, operating in us. The God Paul speaks of in [verse 13](#) is the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. According to [chapter fourteen of John](#), the Father is one with the Son, and the Son is one with the Spirit. The God in

[Philippians 2:13](#) is not only the Father, but the Triune God. He is the Son and the Spirit as well as the Father.

In order to prove that God in [2:13](#) is the Triune God, we need to consider the context of the whole book of Philippians. The last verse of the book, [4:23](#), says, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.” Certainly the Lord as the One whose grace is with our spirit is not separate from the God who operates in us. The very Christ who is with our spirit is the God who operates in us. Furthermore, [1:19](#) speaks of the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. There can be no doubt that the Spirit who supplies us is the Spirit who indwells us. But this Spirit cannot be separate from the God who operates in us. If we put all these verses together and consider the context of the book as a whole, we shall see that the God who operates in us is the Triune God. He is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. He is the very God who is Christ in us ([2 Cor. 13:3a, 5](#)) and the Spirit dwelling in us ([Rom. 8:11](#)).

In [Philippians 2:13](#) Paul says that God operates in us “both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.” Where within us does this willing take place? It must be in our will. This

indicates that God's operation begins from our spirit and spreads into our mind, emotion, and will. We have pointed out that the grace of Christ is with our spirit. However, God's operating to will in us involves not only our spirit but also our will. Therefore, God's operation must spread from our spirit into our will.

As God operates the willing within us, He carries out His working. This corresponds to [Romans 8](#), where we see that God works not only in our spirit, but also in our mind and eventually in our physical body ([vv. 6, 11](#)). We will in our will, and we work in our body. The Triune God operates in us from our spirit, through our will, and then into our physical body.

God's operating is for His good pleasure. His good pleasure is the heart's desire of His will ([Eph. 1:5](#)) that we may reach the climax of His supreme salvation.

Every living being has a good pleasure. This is especially true of God. For this reason, Paul speaks of God's good pleasure. The good pleasure of a mother can be observed in the way she loves her child. Using this as an illustration of God's good pleasure, we may say that God's good pleasure is to love us in a way that makes Him happy. God's working in us is to enable us to

reach the climax of His supreme salvation. Praise Him that we are now in God's good pleasure! As He operates in us, we cooperate with Him by obeying Him.

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