

It's quite common for one to modify their behaviour, depending on who's around.

It really amuses me, when some people (even non-Christians) behave differently around me, because I'm a pastor... Sometimes someone will say a swear-word, and "Oops. Sorry Father" ... (obviously coming from a Roman Catholic background).

But I do it too (modify my behaviour). When there's a Police car behind me on the road, I pay extra special attention to not do anything naughty.

And then of course, a mother might say, "I can't understand why little Johnny's teacher would ever say such a thing about him. At home, he's the most well-behaved child..." Of course, Mum doesn't know how much of a monster he is, when she's not around (to threaten "You just wait until your father gets home")

Alright, it's common for us to modify our behaviour, depending on who's watching... And today, Paul is saying to this Philippian church, "Don't just be obedient when I'm around. Be even more-so, when I'm **not** there."

But, what's this 'obedience' he's talking about??? He tells us: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"... Now, to "work out" our salvation doesn't mean to "figure it out" – he's talking about a physical thing – he's talking about the out-working of our salvation – the practical, physical demonstration of the change that God has made in us (in saving us).

Sadly, of some Christians, I've heard it said:

- “He’s a very different person when he he’s with his mates and gets a few drinks in him; or
- “He’s a very different person in business, to what he is at church.”

You know, some Christians, can be very generous and caring, but in business, they give Jesus a bad name.

- They’re miserly
- take advantage of others
- hard on their employees
- Questionable business practices (bordering on unethical)

This should not be so. That’s the way of the Pharisees – to push it right to the line. The way of Jesus, is a transformed heart.

When Paul says to “**Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**”, he’s **not** talking about:

- A few special projects, or a few ‘good things’ we might occasionally do;
- an individual act of ministry we might do, to fulfil all righteousness, and that’ll cover us for the rest of the week and maybe next week too....

He’s talking about a daily; ongoing, outworking of the salvation we have. He’s talking about a life, that is so profoundly transformed (by God), that every physical and

practical engagement we have with the world around us, has God's fingerprints all over it.

And, this is serious stuff. Living a righteous life, is not an optional extra for disciples of Jesus... There's **fear and trembling** involved here... This is serious, serious stuff...

Usually when the Bible talks about "**Fear and trembling**" – Usually, it's a holy fear, which comes from being in the presence of God.

Is there anyone here today, who happens to be in the presence of God???? And no, it's not just because you're in the midst of a church service...

I know there's people who listen to these messages while they're driving tractors, or operating earth moving machinery... And you, right now, are in the presence of God. And you're not just in the presence of God, just because you happen to be listening to a preacher... You are in the presence of God, because when you gave your life to Jesus, you invited Him into your life – in fact, you gave your life to Him... And He has filled you with His Holy Spirit, and God the Holy Spirit, lives in you...

Now, this brings the 'presence of God', to a whole new level. Alright, we know that God is "Omnipresent" – He is everywhere, all the time,,,,, but for a disciple of Jesus, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, the presence of God is magnified

exponentially.... You can't get rid of him. (If you didn't want him there, you'd think that he was a stalker)...

We are in the presence of God, and so the way we live (**as** children of God), is serious, serious business.

At the moment (in my own daily bible readings), I'm in the book of Leviticus. And what gets me (every time I read Leviticus), is the lengths that Israel had to go to, to get themselves right with God, to come into the presence of a Holy God... And none of this was to be done lightly – the sacrifices and the washing that the Priests (especially) had to go through...

And yet, You and I, through the blood of Jesus, are much closer to God than the High priest ever was. Through the powerful and cleansing blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is in us and He goes with us — Always...

And so, how seriously do we take this? Is it **with fear and trembling**, that we live as children of God???

Alright, so he tells us to **work out** our salvation. He says: ¹³
for it is *God* who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Now, for some folk, they get all very confused about this.

Paul (in his writings), is very well-known for telling us **Not** to work for our salvation. He says things like:

Romans 4:5 (ESV) ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,

Hebrews 4:9–11 (ESV) ⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest.....

Alright, and this is a thread that goes right through Paul's letters, and it helps to shape and to form our Christian understanding that we're not saved by works – we're saved by faith/grace...

But some folk get a bit confused here. How can he, in one place say “Don't work; don't work”,,, and now, here in Philippians, he says “**Work**” – work for God's good pleasure??? Is Paul all muddled up??? Not at all...

In one place, he's talking about “How to **get** saved”; and here in Philippians, he's talking about “How to **be** the saved”...

Alright, so what must I do to get saved??? Believe. Believe in the Lord Jesus. Trust in the Lord Jesus. Submit yourself to the Lord Jesus.

In the Hebrew culture (of which Paul was a product) their understanding was, that to be right with God, they had to:

- keep all the appropriate rules and regulations;
- do the right sacrifices at the right times;
- participate in the right religious ceremonies at the right times;
- eat the right thing & **not** eat the wrong thing;
- not come into contact with the wrong sort of person

Alright, this is the “work” that Paul’s talking about, when he tells us to **rest** from that work...

In the Lord Jesus Christ, we rest from the religious works prescribed by the Law... Jesus Christ, is the ultimate source of our salvation – not the sacrifice; not the ceremony; not the religious festivals... Jesus has superseded all of these things.

And so, we repent of sin, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s how we **get** saved...

But when we **are** ‘the saved’, there is a profound **and real** transformation that takes place in us... It is such a life-changing experience, that Jesus refers to it as being “born again”...

And so, not through work, but through faith, we are born again and we are saved...

And now that I have become one of the saved, it’s just not right for me to go on, as I once was... I’ve been born again – I’m a new creation – I’m very different to what I used to be... And you are too... If your faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ,

you are one of “the saved”... So, how should you and I together, **be** the saved???

And, that’s what today’s reading is telling us.... Don’t for a moment, think that your life, as a disciple of Jesus, is going to be a life of inactivity. In fact, if the Spirit of God is alive in you, you won’t **want** it to be a life of inactivity...

Oh my goodness, I get so cranky, when I hear some Christians getting accused by other Christians, of having a works-based theology, because they work hard for God... What a load of rubbish... We **don’t** work to **get** saved... But **as** “the saved”, man oh man, do we ever work!!! It’s a compulsion of the Holy Spirit...

And you shouldn’t **need** me to be telling you this... If the Holy Spirit of God is in You, He is already **compelling** you to work for His good pleasure... And if you don’t have this inner compulsion, there is something drastically wrong with your relationship with God...

V13 ¹³ for it is *God* who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Alright, God is doing **His** work in you, so that you will **want** to do His good pleasure... And so that you will **work** for His good pleasure...

Now, I think I'd better clarify this word "work". You see, for most of us, (when I say that word "work"), our mind goes straight to "jobs the church needs doing"...

- mowing roster;
- cleaning roster;
- doing RE;
- leading worship;
- preaching roster;
- somebody's got to do the books
- administration...

Yeah,,, that's doing work for God, and it's for His good pleasure,,,, but I don't think that's what he's talking about here....

Back in V12, he hinted as to what it's about... It's about obedience. To work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, is about how we live... And yeah, that might include "how we approach jobs on the church roster"...

But as we read on, we realise that he wants us to be:

- blameless;
- innocent;
- to be children of God, without blemish;
- we shine a line in a dark world

He contrasts us with the crooked and twisted generation – that's what the world is...

The out-working of our salvation, is the practical, physical demonstration of Godliness – the change that God has made in us (when we were saved).

God is working in us, so that we **want** to live righteously...
and so that we work hard, at **being** as the children of God we
are.

And he gives a very simple portrait, of how (when the children
of God get together), we should be together:

V 14 ¹⁴ **Do all things without grumbling or disputing,**

My oh my, I've seen some churches who need to read that bit
(and take it on board)... And we talked about that last week,
when we talked about Christian unity, and having one mind in
Christ Jesus... If we are of one mind in Christ, there
shouldn't be any grumbling or disputing (in the church)...

And here's the thing: When the children of God grumble and
dispute with each other, that's a blemish.... That's the way of
the crooked and twisted world... We're supposed to be
different to that...

I might just divert here for a moment:

There's a lot of the world, getting brought into the church...
And it's not a new thing, but it's happening, and in every
generation, we have to guard against it.

Some churches / many churches, begin to embrace the
values/ethics of the world (in all sorts of issues), whether it be:

- the economics of greed;

- definition of marriage;
- issues of sexuality;
- politics;
- ethics;
- mantra of inclusiveness
- declarations of human rights....

The values of the world, are in some quarters, being embraced by the church... But here, we're learning, that disciples of Jesus, are to be **distinct** from the world... We are to be **different** from what is labelled here, as **a crooked and twisted generation**

The values / ethics of the world, often don't line up with God's values and God's ethics... Sometimes they do, and I'll show you why...

Now for those who are listening to the audio and can't see this, I've drawn a diagram, with a straight line representing God's values, and a crooked line, which sometimes intersects the straight line, representing the world's values... Yes, sometimes the world's values align with God's values, but not always. Why? Because it's a crooked and twisted line...

And public opinion about

- justice/injustice
- right/wrong
- sin/not sin

will occasionally line up with God's truth...

But much of the time, it will be different... And so we need to decide: Will I embrace God's way? Or will I be swayed by a twisted and crooked perspective???

Well, Paul tells us, the way it should be:
be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life

Alright, so working out our salvation with **fear and trembling**, is about:

- living righteously (daily);
- being unified in Christ;
- being a light in the world (being a Godly example in contrast to the crooked and twisted world)
- And fourthly..... and probably most importantly

4. Continuing in the faith.

Now, if you believe in the human teaching (I feel like I say this quite often) of OSAS, you're going to have a bit of trouble with what Paul says here:

There's a very good reason, for working out our salvation with fear and trembling...

V16 ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labour in vain.

Righto, so:

Paul's in prison. His hope, and I might even dare to say "faith" – his hope and faith is that he'll get released from prison, and that he'll be able to visit the Philippians once again... **But** in Paul's mind, this is no sure thing... And we don't know which prison stint Paul is serving, as he wrote this letter... Probably the most likely, is that he's in prison in Rome, and he actually never got released from that prison... He was executed...

But Paul's in prison, and he's thinking about the ministry that Christ has had him doing... And if the Christians at Philippi remained in the faith, he knew he could be proud, that his ministry among them, had not been in vain... But oh how sad it would be (for Paul), if the Philippians ever lost their faith...

On the day of Christ – alright, this is referring to the Day of Judgment – the day that Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead... On the day of Christ, whether the Philippians continued to be holding fast to the word of faith, would make all the difference, as to whether he could be proud of them, or whether his work of preaching the gospel to them in the first place, was all in vain...

Now, if you believe in OSAS, that's really going to mess with your theology... Because quite a popular teaching today, is "If they ever had faith, they'll always have faith". And if they were at one time "saved", they can't ever become "unsaved"...

Well, if that were true, Paul would have nothing to worry about, but he **did** worry. And we should worry too...

Part of our working out our salvation with fear and trembling, is to **hold fast**, to the Gospel in which we believe... I don't think there's going to be any unbelievers in heaven... I don't think there's going to be anybody who (at one time) began following Jesus, but then later on rejected Him... And so, with fear and trembling, we hold fast to the Gospel in which we believe...

Righto:

So, we now come to Vs 17&18, to end on what could be seen as "a rather sombre note"... but through eyes of faith, it's nothing but joy...

Paul knows very well that, his being in prison, could very well end with his execution... And even being jailed, is a high price for Paul to pay... And he's really keen to see that they stay in the faith... He's being poured out, as a sacrificial offering, for their faith...

That all sounds rather melodramatic – what's he talking about???

He's in jail, for preaching the Gospel. He's probably going to be executed, and he actually does get executed, for preaching the Gospel... This, is the sacrifice that Paul has made, to preach the Gospel, and to plant churches (like this Philippian church)... Yes, it's by the blood of Christ, that they are saved, but it's also by the blood of Paul, that they got to hear the Gospel...

And that can sound all very sombre, but in this, Paul rejoices, and he also says to that church: ¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

What a faith... What a marvellous example of working out his own salvation with fear and trembling. What a marvellous example of willing and working, for **God's** good pleasure...

Remember he said back in
Philippians 1:21 (ESV) ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

The out-working of our salvation, is to live for Christ. It's the practical, physical demonstration of the change that God has made in us (when we were saved).

We've been adopted as the children of God... Let's live as the children of God... And be joyful...

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,
We thank You for the immense privilege that it is,
To be called the Children of God...

Lord, we've heard today
that we are to work out our salvation,
with fear and trembling...

Please fill us with Your Holy Spirit.

We ask that You would do Your work in us,
Do **major** works in us – do fine-tuning in us,
That we would long to live righteously;
That we would long to bring You ‘good pleasure’,
in all that we do...

By Your Holy Spirit,
enable us to be the Holy people
that you call us to be.

Keep us strong in the faith...
Please don't let us get half-way through the race,
And then give up...
Lord, You mean more to us than anything...
Help us to hold firm to the Word of Faith.

And Lord, we rejoice.
Even when it gets tough;
Even when it's difficult to be a Christian;
Or when it's dangerous
(because the world hates you so much)
We rejoice, because our eyes are set, not on this life,
but we eagerly await the glorious day of Your coming.

Come Lord Jesus.
But until You do,
Let us be Your light, shining in this dark world.

Amen.