

Work Out Your Own Salvation

Introduction. Our salvation is two-fold. First, without Christ we could not be saved (Hebrews 9:22). Second, without our own determination, we could not be saved (Acts 2:40). In spite of what many may say, works do play a role in our salvation — not in the sense of merit, but in the sense of obedience. We have to be obedient if we want heaven (Matthew 7:21-23; Hebrews 5:9).

No other one has, or can have, as much interest in your salvation as you have. It is every person's duty to be as happy as possible here, and to be prepared for eternal happiness in the future realm. No one has a right either to throw away their life or their soul. If it is our duty to try to save our life when in danger of drowning, it is no less our duty to try to save our soul when in danger of hell.

Therefore, there is no command more frequently repeated in the scriptures than the one to make ourselves a new heart; to strive to enter the strait gate; to break away from sin and repent. Paul put it this way: "Work out your own salvation" (Philippians 2:12-16). Our lesson will look at some specific steps we can take to work out our own salvation as Paul commanded.

I. Put Your Faith In God

- A. Our obedience and lifestyle need to be real and genuine, not something we put on to impress or gain the favor of another.
- B. Your faith has to be your own (Joshua 24:15). Scripture assures you that God is worthy of your faith.
 - 1. He knows you (Isaiah 43:1).
 - 2. He will fight for you (Exodus 14:14).
 - 3. He thinks about you (Psalm 40:17).
 - 4. He has plans for you (Jeremiah 29:11).
 - 5. He is your refuge (Psalm 62:6-8).
 - 6. He is always with you (Matthew 28:20).
- C. Some people come to worship assemblies to keep mom and dad happy or to keep their husband or wife happy. Their faith is not their own — and that's discouraging. People you highly respect will come and go, and inevitably disappoint you — and that's discouraging. If your faith is in them, what then? Put your faith in God and influence those people to work out their salvation.

II. Take Responsibility For Your Own Life

- A. The local congregation should edify the body of Christ.
 - 1. The church edifies through worship (Hebrews 10:25).
 - a) As lively stones, we are built up into a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5).
 - b) We are to confess our faults and pray for one another (James 5:16).
 - 2. The church edifies through faithful teaching.
 - a) The leaders of the congregation have oversight of the teaching program and are responsible for protecting the church against false doctrine.
 - b) God gave the church the responsibility of holding fast the faithful word (Titus 1:9), and it is a very serious one.

3. The church edifies through discipline (Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; Titus 3:10).
 4. The church edifies by maintaining and encouraging good works (1 Corinthians 12:14-27; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:15-17; 1 Timothy 6:17-19).
 5. The church edifies by the appropriate love of the members for each other (1 Corinthians 12:25; Ephesians 4:29-32; Philippians 4:2; Colossians 3:12-15).
- B. However, you bear the ultimate responsibility to develop yourself and to encourage your family to develop. What can you do?
1. You can follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, and fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:11-12).
 2. You can keep what is committed to your trust (1 Timothy 6:20).
 3. You can hold fast the form of sound words (2 Timothy 1:13).
 4. You can study to show yourself approved (2 Timothy 2:15).
 5. You can desire the pure milk of the word (1 Peter 2:1-2).
 6. You can add virtues to your faith (2 Peter 1:5-11).
 7. You can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (2 Peter 3:18).
- C. Shifting blame is cowardly and ineffective (Genesis 3:12-13). Blame builds a wall that keeps us from humility and repentance.
1. When we sin or fail to mature, it's our fault. When we choose a path away from God it's because of our worldly desires (James 1:14).
 2. It's crucial to remember that God assures us we always have a choice to do right (Luke 11:4; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 2:18).

III. Know Your Bible

- A. Are you going to work out your own salvation, or are you going to risk letting someone else work it out for you (2 Peter 1:10)?
- B. To know your Bible means to know more than the books of the Bible, although that's a start. It means you're going to have to know about doctrine and sin.
1. There has been a noticeable decline for several years in doctrinal preaching. Postmodernism places an emphasis on deeds rather than beliefs. Be a good neighbor, be kind, be thoughtful of others, be generous, help others, be tolerant of what others believe, and impress others with your good deeds rather than your doctrinal beliefs.
 - a) One would rarely hear a sermon about the right church, the plan of salvation, the danger of false doctrine, or the great scheme of redemption in some churches. The reason is that these are topics primarily about what we believe. They have a low priority among postmodernists.
 - b) Doctrine is the foundation both for believing what is right and doing what is right. The proclamation of sound doctrine is not simply about baptism and the church, but it is the foundation for making right decisions concerning both conduct and belief (1 Timothy 1:9-11; 2 Timothy 3:10).
 2. There has also been a noticeable decline for several years in preaching about specific sins. It used to be that people knew how New Testament Christians believed on abortion, adultery, dancing, drinking, gambling, homosexuality, immodest apparel, pornography, suicide, and substance use.

- a) Becoming a believer in Christ carries with it a corresponding desire to turn away from the works of the flesh (Matthew 15:19-20; Romans 1:29-31; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Timothy 1:8-10; Revelation 21:8).
- b) No one can buck the trend of conformity and be holy without preaching that identifies sin and exhorts people to leave it (1 Peter 1:13-16). If you're ever going to save yourself from a "crooked" or "corrupt" generation, it will be because someone loved you and loved holiness enough to teach you about it (Acts 2:40; cp. Numbers 25:6-13).
- C. It's sad to think how many people have been willingly led to their own ruin (Matthew 15:14; 2 Peter 2:1-2).

IV. Live Your Life As A Light

- A. As Paul wrote in Philippians 2:15, God wants us to be lights in the world. This is the final way to work out your salvation (cp. Matthew 5:13-16).
- B. I know we've discussed a lot about why hypocrisy isn't a valid excuse for disobedience, but on the other hand, if we cause someone to sin, there will be repercussions (Matthew 18:6).
- C. In order to be a light and in order to secure your salvation, you've got to cleanse yourself and perfect holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14). You'd better watch your light!

Conclusion. "With fear and trembling" was exhibited by Joseph when Potiphar's wife tempted him and he exclaimed, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). This holy fear trembles with the kind of anxiety that one has who feels that he has an important interest at stake, and is in danger of losing it. The reason for "fear" in this case is the danger of losing the soul.

Scripture says we can take measures to secure our own salvation. Have you worked out your own salvation? You can start by obeying the gospel. You can continue by removing sin through confession and repentance. In both starting and continuing, this congregation can assist you. We're asking you to make it known while we sing our invitation song this morning.

I am deeply indebted to Greg King for the use of his material.