



The 'Gift' of the Gospel

By

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So far in my 8th Season Podcast series I've shared thoughts with you about:

- 8 Rules for Bible Study
- 40 Rules for Ministry
- The Heart of the Gospel
- Defending and Confirming the Gospel
- Your Fellowship in the Gospel
- The Completion of the Gospel
- The Affection of the Gospel
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- The Excellence of the Gospel
- The Sincerity of the Gospel
- The Fruit of the Gospel
- The Advancement of the Gospel
- The Preaching of the Gospel
- Living for the Gospel
- Conduct Worthy of the Gospel

- Suffering for the Gospel
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- The Sacrificial Mind of the Gospel
- The Gospel's Name Above Every Name
- The Glory and Honor of the Gospel
- The Power of the Gospel
- The Obedience of the Gospel

The next aspect I'd like to share with you is the 'Gift' of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Therefore, my beloved, as you 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; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” Philippians 2:12-13

I now want to address what has been a ‘sticking point’ in Gospel message for centuries. It concerns these words – ‘work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.’ Many people point to this portion of Philippians 2:12 as a ‘proof-text’ that works play an important role in whether they will be saved or not. Even though the author of Philippians is the same author who wrote Galatians, Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians, they still believe human ‘works’ are necessary for God to save them. If that was true, then no one could or would be saved. If you don’t believe me, read Galatians, Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, and Paul’s other letters. The apostle was quite clear – writing under the inspiration of God Himself – that salvation is ‘not of works, lest anyone should boast.’

I believe it's important that Christians remember that 'salvation' is a 'free gift,' not the outcome of something we attempt to earn through 'good works.' This is important for multiple reasons. What we believe about salvation impacts us personally. What we believe about salvation impacts the souls we talk with about the Gospel of Christ.

Here are a some examples to support my position:

"knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." Galatians 2:16

"Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound.

But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 5:18-21

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:4-10

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.” Romans 3:23-25

The difference between ‘working’ for something and receiving that same thing as a ‘free gift’ is huge. Think about birthday presents for a minute. Do you ‘work’ for those presents or do family and friends give you presents ‘freely’ because they care about you? The same is true for Christmas presents.

So, how does that square with what Paul wrote the Philippians?

Remember first that Paul's words in Philippians 2:12 follow everything he wrote prior to that in the letter. That's context. Another part of context is what follows – 'for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure' (Philippians 2:13). Once we have the context well in mind we can move to the original language –

μετα φοβου και τρομου την εαυτων σωτηριαν
κατεργαζεσθε

You'll notice that the Greek reads a bit differently than some English translations – 'with fear and trembling your own salvation work out.' Why would Paul begin with the words μετα φοβου και τρομου την? What did Paul say in the earlier context that would cause the Philippians to 'fear and tremble?' Go back to the verses immediately preceding verse 12:

'Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' Philippians 2:9-11

Jesus has the 'name which is above every name.' Every knee in Heaven, those on the earth, and those under the earth will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Do those words not cause you to fear and tremble? What is the beginning of knowledge? The 'fear of the Lord.' What is the beginning of wisdom? The 'fear of the Lord.'

It is from that position of 'fear and trembling' that Paul wrote that the Philippians would 'work out' their own salvation. The Greek word for 'work out' is *katergazomai* and means 'work down to the end point, to finish, to accomplish.' Remember the overarching context of Paul's letter to this point? 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.' What did Jesus say the night He was arrested? 'I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do' (John 17:4). What were the last words Jesus spoke on the cross? 'It is finished!' Jesus completed the mission that God the Father had given Him. Jesus 'glorified' His Father on earth and 'finished the work' His Father had given Him to do.

Paul used the same Greek word in 1 Corinthians 4:17 – "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' The context there is not 'working' or trying to 'earn' your salvation. It concerned the fact that even though the outward man 'is perishing. yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.' Our 'affliction' is light and only for a moment, but it is 'working, producing,' for us something that is 'far more exceeding and eternal' in its weight of glory. It is the

'invisible' within the visible. It is the mysterious world that Christians find themselves living in every day.

Every true believer in Christ has been given the 'gift' of eternal life and 'spiritual gifts' with which they are able to serve God. It is up to each of us to use those spiritual gifts and life opportunities, including the most difficult of life's challenges, to do all we can to serve God through 'obedience' to Him – which is a direct context of the verse – 'Therefore, my beloved, as you 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.' The result?

'for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.' Philipppians 2:13

Notice that it is God who 'works' (ἐνεργέω – to be effective) to accomplish two important things: 'both to will and do for His good pleasure.' Isn't that our calling – to do His will and please Him? I think it is. Who does that 'work?' God does – 'for it is God who works in you.' God's Holy Spirit works in us to accomplish God's will. Look at these verses:

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Notice that the Spirit of God ‘works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.’ God does His Work (*energeó*) through us using His power. That’s the meaning of – ‘but it is the same God who works in all.’ God receives all the glory for our salvation and the works ‘which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.’

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In Christ's Love and Grace,

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