Working in and working out

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[0:00] May we turn our attention this evening to words in Philippians chapter 2. The Episodipal to the Philippians in chapter 2.

And words you will find in verse 12. Toward the end of the verse. And then verse 13. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.
The product of God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.
May I read the two verses in food? Wherefore my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not to my presence only, but now much more to my absence. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.
For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. This council of the apostles concerns the most important subject in the whole wide world.
[1:26] The most important blessing in life. Salvation.

Work out your own salvation. Love salvation has got many aspects to it. And we use it with different shades of meaning.
We use it of someone who has been converted. We say he's been saved. And there are some people who will go up to a person almost in the street and say, Are you saved?
Well, I admire their boldness, their candour, and their zeal. But sometimes, not altogether, their distress.
And there is a sense in which it is right to use the word salvation in that way. Because the experience of conversion is so tremendous, so momentous, there is nothing less than passing from death to life, from a state of wrath to a state of grace, translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.
[3:00] But there is another aspect to salvation than conversion. For salvation is an ongoing thing. And salvation is even a future thing.

Now, as is the apostle, writing to Romans, Now is your salvation nearer than when you believe. Obviously, when they believe, they underwent that tremendous experience of conversion.
But that's not all that there is in salvation. One might almost say it's the beginning of salvation. The entry upon it. It's like entering in at the wicket gate in Bunyan Pilgrim's Progress.
But there is also the way in between. And not until a pilgrim crosses the river and reaches the celestial city, is his salvation complete.
But there are two things that enter particularly into salvation. Not the only two things, but I think the main thing.
[4:16] Justification and sublimation. are the main aspects of salvation. Of course, there also is adoption into the family of God. And there is the final glorification of the celestial city.

But particularly, I think, these two parts, justification and sanctification, are the main aspects of salvation.
Now, in the verse before us, it is obvious that there is God's heart and ours in the outworking of salvation.
I'll explain that as we go on. Because there are two words, or rather two thoughts, that dominate this verse. There is a working out and a working in.
An outworking and an inworking. Paul says to the Colossians, work out your own salvation. And he says, God works us in you.
[5:27] There's the outworking that is ours. God. And there's the inworking that is God. And this applies to the ongoing salvation of the believer.

Between the wicked gate that is to it and the celestial city. But if I look at this verse, I realize that there is one aspect of salvation where this does not apply.

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This, we might call heart-fleshed, does not apply. It does not apply to the sinner's justification. Paul doesn't say to the Colossians, to the Philippians, work out your own justification with fear and vengeance. No, you see, he's writing to those who are already justified.
Completely justified. He's writing to Christian believers whose justification is complete even now. And yet, there are those who are trying to work out their own salvation.
[6:45] It lies, I think, at the very root of the sinner's thinking. He feels that he's responsible, that he must do it himself, he must earn it all himself.

Some may even conceive that they could do with a little help from God. But, they'll manage themselves somehow or other, and they've got to do it.
In other words, they've got to be justified by the deeds of the Lord. The heathen, in his blindness, of course, thinks in this way.
Nothing for nothing. We can't expect that the Deities will ever forgive things that have not been atone thought by the President himself. Or they lay righteousness to the charge to someone who has not watched it out himself.
And so, he goes on purgaming. He submits to rigor and ascetic tests. He may even lie on a bed of nails.
[8:04] He denies the body even ethnic food. He goes on a long purgaming if he's an Indian and a Hindu to the Ganges and baths in the water of the Holy Mother River.

But there are those in Christian land, even under the sound of the Christian gospel, and they think much along the same line. Just like the Jew at a poor day, who went about to establish their own righteousness by the keeping of the commandments of Moses, by circumcision, by a punctilious attendance upon the details of sacrifice, by tithing all that they talked to grew, even to the extent of mint and cummins.
Those Pharisees will set about to establish their own righteousness, not understanding God's way. Well, my friends, it cannot be.
by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. And there are two reasons, two good reasons, why it may not be.
For one reason, there is no sinner, not even the very best of the fallen man, who can work out his own righteousness.
[9:36] he cannot work out his own righteousness on attaining to status of law righteousness before God.

You see, just on occasion, it's not a matter of righteousness being worked out in us, of our being to better people. God is a matter of how outstanding is before God as judge.
And so, justification concerns righteousness in its aspect to give. Not the thing as corruption, not the thing in its unhooginess, but the thing in its guilt.
that makes us responsible to God and guilty in his sight. It's a law thing.
It's something that belongs to the court, so to speak. Or as it is sometimes called a forensic matter. Our justification.
[10:52] Not whether we're good or bad, it's whether we're right in this or wrong. well then, how is it that we can be righteous?

And what is the kind of righteousness that God requires when he justifies anyone? It's a perfect righteousness. It must be completely flawless.
It is without a line. It must be a hundred percent perfect. And it won't take to be point nothing, nothing, nothing, one shot.
It must be perfect or not at all. And is it not very obvious, my friends, that we can never achieve to it by our own effort?
Could my zeal no respite know? Could my tears forever flow? That for sin would not atone.
[11:56] That's how Top Lady puts it and he was right. But as Paul puts it, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. For by the laws and knowledge of sin, the law convicts and the law condemns, but the law cannot justify a sinner who is still a sinner, who is guilty, guilty before God.

If you visit Jerusalem, you'll find that there are several gates into the city. There's Herod's gate, there's the Jaffa gate, there is St. Stephen's gate, the Lion's gate as it's called, and there's a gate from the south that comes up from the old young gate into the city.
Now sometimes you see a picture of Jerusalem taken from the Mount of Olive. And you see the markings of a gate that one time was there, the golden gate, the most splendid gate into the city in

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the olden days.
But you can't enter that gate now into Jerusalem. It's been blocked up for hundreds of years because when the Turks took over Jerusalem, the Mohammedan, and one of the sultans was told, that the prince of the Judah was to enter in by that gate, he immediately caused it to be blocked up, lest it should be fulfilled, and he would be dethroned.
And then to make assurance double sure, he put a cemetery just outside the gate that would defile anyone who tried to enter. The gate has been blocked up for hundreds of years, and no one can enter Jerusalem by the golden gate now.
[13:54] Now my friends, no one can enter into the status of justification before God by his own work.

There was a good evangelical chapter in general to the forces earlier to this century, indeed, about the 19th church.
Bishop had a bishop from Bishop Taylor Smith. And Bishop Taylor Smith had a way of trying to put a word in for the master of the faith and asked people about their soul salvation.
On this occasion, he was sitting in the barber's chair and asked the barber how he expected to stand before God. Oh, the barber says, I do the best I can.
I think I'll be all like to me. I'm doing my best. And when it was he was still in, he looked round and he saw that there was a number of clients waiting and he saw the barber and he said to the barber let me give you a hand.
[15:23] He began peeling off his coat. Oh, no, sir, said the barber, thank you very much but I think I'm married. he said let me help you you have a foolish room here.

No, I'm afraid Barbara said I'm afraid you won't do not up to me. But I do the best I can. I said but I'm afraid your best is not good enough for my clients.
Then said the bishop neither is your best good enough for my God. Your best and my best is not good enough for the God of righteousness.
He requires perfection. He requires a hundred percent. No flaws no annoyance. We cannot do it. That way is blocked. By the deeds of the law shall no place be justified for by the laws and knowledge of saints. And there's another good reason. There's a sad reason that we cannot do it.
[16:30] There is the happy reason that we need not do it. Because it has already been done. We need not work out our own righteousness to be accepted before God.

For unto him that work hath not but believeth of him who justifies the ungodly his faith is counted for righteousness. For justification is by grace alone through faith alone.
These two by grace alone through faith alone. It is all of grace. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.
To everyone who believes or as the hymn puts it, Jesus did it. He did it all long long ago.
And so as far as doing is concerned, we are not required to do anything to be accepted as righteous before God. It's offered not on the basis of our obedience or of our doing, but solely, my friends, let me emphasize it, solely, because of the righteousness of Christ.
[17:49] Again, the court the hymn, lay your guilty doing down, down of Jesus, for this doing, this doing, ends in death.

Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardones all our sins and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, that is, laid to our hands, and received by faith alone, by grace alone, through faith alone.
Now I have this little story that some of you may know, I think it's so up to the point I'm trying to make. It concerns a farmer and a blacksmith.
a blacksmith was seeking salvation, but couldn't see the life.
And a farmer was a Christian, he was trying to influence him for good, trying to explain things to him, but no, the blacksmith was of the impression that he had to do something himself, but read about what the something was, like most people, but he felt he had to do something about it himself.
[19:18] He couldn't take salvation as a gift. On this occasion, the blacksmith had made a wrought-iron gift for the farmer, and the farmer came to take the delivery off.

The blacksmith was a good craftsman, and like good craftsman, he knew good work, and very proudly walked his own work. When he was annoyed, the farmer took out a hammer, and began tinkering with the gate, giving it a little cup here, and a harder cup there, and the blacksmith said,

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what do you think you're doing?
And he says, isn't the gate good enough as it is? No, certainly isn't a good enough gate, but I'm only putting my finishing capsules to you. And the blacksmith got very annoyed with it.
That gate is as good a gate has ever left my hand, and there's no finishing touches you need to put to it. And then the farmer said, that's what you're trying to do to the righteousness of Christ. You're trying to put your finishing touches to it.
My friends, we must accept that righteousness, and we have nothing to do in working it out or working it in. It is already there to be accepted by the sinful act of faith in Jesus Christ.
[20:45] To him that worked of knowledge, that believer from him that justifies thee, and God reached his faith as country for righteousness, and he doesn't contribute a pin clap to it himself.

Now let me speak to the other aspect of salvation. Sanctification. Now for justification, it's a righteousness that's brought out entirely apart from us, but we see by faith in Christ Jesus, sanctification is something that's a righteousness, it's a righteousness that's brought out in us.
And it is to this aspect of salvation that I feel the apostle is drawing our attention here. Work out your own salvation with fear and friendliness, for it is God that works in you, both to make you willing, and to make you able to do his good pleasure.
Then you see, there's a working and and there's a working is. There's a partnership partnership. I'd hardly like even to speak of it as a partnership because that seems to suggest that we are on equal terms with God, that we are workers together with him in our own salvation.
[22:19] Well, there's a sense in which that is true, there is cooperation, there is his part and all. But let me make this clear, it's not a kind of peace work, that God does so much and we do so much, that God stops here and there we take over, that God does say a half and we do half, or three quarters and we do one quarter, it's not like that.

We do all and God does all and God does all and we do nothing apart from God.
For the work of our sanctification, just like the work of our justification is all of grace. It is by grace that we are saved, through and through.
For by grace are you saved through faith and not in yourselves, it is the gift of God, not a work that any man should boast, for we are his workmanship, we are his workmanship, created in Christ himself unto good work, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk thereby.
Now this is a paradox. And you know a paradox is an apparent contradiction, it is not a real contradiction, it's just apparent. Life is full of paradoxes, the Christian life is full of paradoxes, and here is well.
[23:59] There's God's working and our working, and the overlap right through. His, ours, working out, God's working in.

Let us begin where we ought to begin, with the in-working of God. God works in you to will, and to do, his good pleasure.
And unless God were to be working in us, we could never work it out. It's not the just that he repairs the broken machinery, so to speak, broken by the fault, it's more than that.
he recreates the shuttered machine, the shuttered machine. He liberates the will, he renews it.
Someone has put it like this, the will does work, just like a car wheel, but it's jumped and reversed.
[25:09] It can go, but it can only go backwards. I think that's quite a true description of the sinner. He makes his choice, but his choice is never Godward. He moves, but he never goes forward towards the things that are right, and towards God, he goes backward to the things that are wrong.

And if we are going to be saved with a righteousness wrought inside us that conforms us to God, God, and makes us carry the family like next, of Jesus Christ, then there must be a working out in us, the Holy Spirit of God.
There must be the energising Spirit at work. There must be the dynamic of the grace Spirit, giving us the power and the strength to work out what God is working in.
And so, my friends, it's not as if we can say to God now, we take over. You've done your part. We take over now, and we work out our own sanctification and our own hope.
no, he must do it, my friends. You don't begin in the Spirit and finish in the flesh. You don't begin by grace and end up with work.
[26:45] This is a subtle temptation in the Christian life that we feel it's our part and we must do. One of the fathers of Russia has a rather simple but naive figure about this side of things.

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One that certainly would go down with his crofting of farming community because it wasn't Easter Ross. He said there was a farmer there who suspected that a thief had been stealing his corn out in his garden.
so he made up his mind that he would sit up this night and watch for him and catch the thief. Well, catch the thief he did. But the thief was strong.
So strong that the farmer was getting the worst of it. And instead of the farmer binding the thief, the thief was mauling the farmer. When it so happened that the farmer's cries were heard by a potterby, a stranger spoke him in.
Stronger than the thief, overpowered the intruder, soon had him tied up. The farmer profusely sent his benefactor and said now help me to get him on my back and I carried him to the jail and case.
[28:18] Well, he hadn't gone round the bend for the three beast, he broke the cords and again started with the farmer. And the stranger again appeared.

And again the thief was overpowered. And the farmer turned to him and said now he says don't leave me, don't leave me until we get this rascal into the jail and case.
It was a simple, not very polished illustration but perfectly added. We need the grace of God with us right through.
We can't say you've done your part, thank you, now I do mine. Whatever we do, God's hand must be over us. We can do nothing apart from his grace.
And so the apostle says work out your own salvation because God it is who works in you, enabling you, making you willing and making you able to walk in the way of his commandments.
[29:26] But it does not leave us out entirely, oh no, there's our outworking. Grace was not received after the fashion the wise men got his spectacles.

You all have heard about these wise men, Gotham, who sat on a tree to sow off a branch and of course sat on the outside of the saw cut and then fell down with the branch and wondered why.
This occasion his sight was failing, we are told, and he presented with a pair of spectacles. And immediately he got the spectacles, he put them on his nose and he shut his eyes.
After all, weren't the spectacles there for seeing? And wouldn't they do the work for him? Of course, he didn't see very much. Enabling grace is there to help us to carry on our part.
Work out your own salvation and work it out with fear and trembling. Oh, there's a place for that. As Robbie Duncan once said, to a student, friend of his, as they were walking along Prince of Street one day, and this student, they said to him, I've been praying for so and so, and I've been speaking to him, but it's of no avail, making no impression on him.
[31:01] He's still resisting me, I think I'll give it up. And the good doctor, who was a really saintly man, stopped and he put up his hands and he said, I said, don't do that, don't do that.

There's hope for a sinner as long as he is outside hell. And then he added, and there's fear for a saint as long as he is outside heaven. with fear and trembling, not with cocksureness, not with complacency, not in a spirit of arrogance, yes, with reverence and godly fear, with a jealous watchfulness over our own hearts and lives, but not, my friend, with a meticulous carefulness, the kind of thing that is never at rest.
That is not, I think, what is meant here, not the spirit of anxiety, meticulous legalism, fibrous and fussy, punctiliousness, no, that's not faith.
The prophet says, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength, by returning and rest shall ye be saved.
Their strength is to sit still, and while we might not press this side here, at the same time, I want you to avoid the idea that there is a fussiness and a feverish anxiety over this, as if we were alone.
[32:42] No, we must watch, it's the watchfulness and the prayerfulness that is inculcated here. Watch and pray that ye enter not into salvation, into temptation.

Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. And so, while we work out our own salvation, with fear and trembling, we must work it out with faith and confidence in our God.
love. I think there are two sides to this discipline. There are two sides to it. There's the negative side and there's the positive side.
Let me explain it as we go along. In other words, there's the putting off and the putting on. There is the mortifying, to use the word of Colossians, and there is the quickening.

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Mortifying is the putting to death. The quickening is the bringing to life. And both these aspects, negative and positive, enter into the discipline of our own sanctification.
[33:57] And we need both. At the same time, you can't have the negative alone, and you can't have the positive without the negative.

Have you watched a beach hedge? That's the thing from beach trees in winter. I think there's nothing so lovely as a beach hedge in winter with its leathery brown leaves.
And these leaves will stay on all winter. Of course, a few may blow off, but the leaves will stay on. But they'll go off in the spring, when the new bumps begin to swell, and the new green leaves are pushed out, the old brown leaves are pushed off.
And my friends, you can't get rid of the old without having the new. new. Or as Thomas Boston once put it, I found I could not rid my heart of its carnal choice until I had put something better in its place.
Or Thomas Chalmers, when he talked about the expulsive power of a new affection, dead, you can never get the brown dead leaves of dead wood.
[35:28] It's got to be living wood, living bugs, that threw off the old dead leaves. There is a positive side to it, and there is a positive life required.

But from the negative side, I don't think it could be better expressed than the chapter I read in the Colossians. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, sensuality, for which things sake the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience.
There is filthiness of the flesh, but there is also the filthiness of the spirit. Listen, but now put off all these anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, or slander, filthy communication out of your mouth, lie not to one another, anger, and wrath, and malice, and slander, and lies.
You have put off the old man with his deeds. Put off all these. You have put on the new man with his holy deeds. put on therefore his deeds as the elect of God, holy and beloved.
Bowels and mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another. There is the discipline of the Christian life with its aim at sanctification.
[37:10] Now, in order to attain to this, we must use the means that God has provided for us.

And, first and foremost, if we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing God works in us and his hand is over ours, we must pay attention to the word of God.
There is no holiness without the Bible. There is no sanctification without the scriptures. Jesus said in his prayer, sanctify them through thy word as truth.
Again, there are the different ways in which the scriptures can work in us. By private reading, or, as we today have met around God's word in the means of grace in the church services.
Furthermore, prayer. Prayer, whether it be private prayer or public prayer, praying together or praying alone.
[38:26] And praying alone should not be confined just to stated times or a stated place. We should learn to cultivate the atmosphere of prayer.

Praying always, says the apostle, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit. Praying always. Praying that God would give us a praying spirit, a praying atmosphere, whereby we could get in touch with headquarters at a moment's notice.
prayer. You don't need to get a place of orison in order to pray. I've always liked that remark of Roland Hill, the Queen, evangelical preacher of the 18th century.
He says, I like ejaculatory prayer. The prayer is thrown out under the stress of the movement. Like Nehemiah, when he was giving the king his wine. I like ejaculatory prayer, he says.
It gets to heaven before the devil can get a shot at it. There is nothing like the pride of those who can make a good prayer and know it.
[39:45] The pride of grace. But ejaculatory prayer, it gets to heaven before the devil can get a shot at it. And Christian fellowship, not just for the study of the word, or even meeting together for prayer, but just speaking one to another.

In Malachi we read, they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another. We're not told what they said. We're not told it was a church service, or a synagogue service.
But they helped each other by their very fellowship. It's like the living coals of fire. Get the living coals together, and they seem to supply heat one to the other, and you'll get a glowing fire such as

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would be, very enticing on a cold night like this.
But scatter the embers, and they soon go on. Let's see that we keep the embers together, and in this way we'll keep up the heat.
But not only Christian fellowship, but Christian service. Oh yes, Christian service has got a place. Whether it be the minister in the pulpit, you know it says in scripture, he that water shall be watered also himself.
[41:11] Or whether it be the elder in his district, or whether it be the teacher in the Sunday school. I wonder how many teachers have learned more in teaching others than ever they've been taught themselves by teachers.

Or it may be just showing hospitality one to another. In Christian service, in seeking to serve the master in this way, we are working out our own salvation, because God is working in us, to make us able and willing to do his good pleasure.
my friends, let me end up on the note of his work. There's no working out without his working in. And it is by the grace of God that we are saved, both in our justification and in our sanctification. In our justification, we do nothing, but accept by faith the righteousness that is already perfectly wrought in our sanctification.
It is by grace that we are made holy. It is by the working of God's spirit that we are made holy. For it is the work of God's free spirit.
[42:37] Our part, yes, and we must do it carefully with trembling, with godly fear, faithfully, faithfully, at the same time realising that all his strength for it comes from above.

His grace is sufficient for us. His strength is made perfectly weakness and in that confidence let us by his grace work out our own salvation for it is God who works in us to make us able and willing to do of his good pleasure.
Let us pray. Lord, we thank thee for the grace thou given us. we pray for grace to use that grace in Jesus' name.
Amen.

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