

Sanctification 2

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[0 : 00] I'd like tonight to continue with our studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians, and chapter 2 and verse 13. Philippians chapter 2 and verse 13.

You recall that last time we looked at verse 12, where we were looking at the subject of sanctification, and you remember that we saw verses 12 and 13 were very much in a balance in the presentation of this passage to our minds, how there is both our side and God's side, and how we have to establish the very important connection between them, that it is in fact God's side which is foundational, and how our side of working out our salvation is on the basis of God's working in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

And I don't want to repeat what we said last time, those who weren't able to hear it, you can hear the tape at some time for yourself to see what we looked at in verse 12, but you remember it did, that we saw how it contained the elements of obedience to Christ, how it also contained the matter of, in working out our salvation, of fear and trembling, how it contained that matter of reverence, and the avoidance of all that would be displeasing to God, as far as we are able to see that, and also how we saw that the matter was so personal, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

And the balance, as we said, is the balance that sees these two things, these two sides of the issue of sanctification, working out our own salvation on the one side, for it is God who works in you, because of the fact, because this is what is foundationally saying, it is God who works in you, or who is working in you, of his good pleasure, both to will and to do.

And it is to that side of the issue that we might give our minds a little tonight, to contemplate these things, this side of sanctification, verse 13, for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.

[2 : 29] Now the main thing that we are going to look at in that is the effectiveness of the work of God in sanctifying his people.

Although we are also to touch upon something that's also mentioned, something in itself which is very important, although we're not looking into it at this moment in great depth, it's the sovereignty of that work of God, where it's spoken of as being of his good pleasure.

And first of all, and it's an effective work. It is God who is working in you, both to will and to do. And it's an effective work, first of all, in its continuance, in the constancy of the work that God works in the hearts of his people.

It's an ongoing work. It's a work which is not thwarted. It's a work which cannot actually be, by any means, outside ourselves or inside ourselves.

Be put back. Put God off in his purposes. Nothing of that ultimately is possible at all. And God sanctifies his people. And it's a crucial thing for us to remember, as we'll come to look later at some of the uses for the question of these particular truths of sanctification.

[3 : 50] God cannot be diverted in his task. God cannot be put off in his purpose. God cannot be put off in this great power that is filled, in this working that is constant, that is ongoing, that is not disrupted, that is not in any way thwarted by any power, by any sort, out with himself, in ourselves, or out with ourselves.

And that brings us to see that it's in line with what we saw way back in chapter 1 and verse 6. Being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

He has begun that work. It's a good work. He has begun the work. You remember we saw that that indicates how God himself alone could be the author of such a work as this.

That it includes his own deliberation, his own choice, his own particular sovereign will engaged in this matter. He has begun that work in you, he says.

And when he begins that work, it cannot actually ever cease. It will continue, and it will be constant, and it will be continuous, and it will be carried forth.

[5 : 10] And it's that carrying force of it now that is actually brought before us in verse 13. Verse 13 here is, if you like, the very heart of what he's saying in chapter 1, verse 6.

Chapter 1, verse 6 are the boundaries of chapter 2, verse 13. The beginning of the work and the completion of the work in the day of Christ.

These are the boundaries of 2, verse 13. The God who is at work. The God who is now presently active. The God who is now working in a way that cannot be thwarted.

It is God who is at work in you. Therefore, you are to work out your own salvation with fear and kindness. And so the effectiveness of the work is first of all in its continuance, in its constancy, in the fact that God is carrying it through at every step.

You see, there are lessons from the Old Testament here also. For example, the book of Numbers. It may not strike us as we look at the book of Numbers in itself or in its context among the other four books of Moses in these first books of the Bible.

[6 : 25] Why is Numbers placed where it is? Why are the themes of Numbers the kind of themes that they are? What is the major thrust of the book of Numbers?

What is God telling us by that particular book? Well, he's telling us this among many other things. But he's telling us this, I think, primarily. But for all their stiff-necked rebelliousness, for all their particular misunderstandings of what God is doing and will do for them, for all their failures to accept the promises of God towards them, God is saying to these people, that is the promised land that I have promised to give you and you're going in there because I'm going to bring you into possession of it.

and you look through the book of Numbers and that is ultimately the message of it again and again when God is saying, this is what I am determined to do.

This is what I am determined to do. Whoever it is that stands in my, whoever it stands, that stands against me, stands against my people. Whether it's the king of all, the king of Sihon, the king of Bashan, whoever it is that stands against them, God is saying, these people are blessed.

and that cannot be renounced. And the blessing with which they are blessed is the blessing that sanctifies, the blessing that cannot be frustrated in its own divine purpose, the blessing that assures that the inheritance is reached through all the troubles of this world.

[8 : 09] It is God who is working. Working actively, continuously in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.

So first of all, this effectiveness of the work is to be seen in its ongoing constancy and continuousness. And secondly, to be seen in its thoroughness.

It's something which affects us, we'll see, the will and the doing of the believer. But it's important, first of all, to notice this word, worketh, or is working.

It's a continuous tense. This working in you. Because it's a word which Paul uses elsewhere. In fact, he uses it within this same epistle.

He uses it at the end of chapter 3. From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

- [9 : 23] He also uses it in the passage we read together in Ephesians 1. In Ephesians 1 and verse 19, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ?

Now you see, Paul is saying to us, here, here is a word, working. Here is something that has a pattern elsewhere.

Here is something that we can see at work elsewhere. Here is something that we can actually see if we look into how God has been active elsewhere or will be active elsewhere though it has not yet come to pass.

These are two reference points because the way it's put is according to and that always tells you there's a pattern in it. In other words, what's happening in the heart of the believer is patterned upon, can be gauged by something that you see elsewhere.

Think first of all of Ephesians 1.19. The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe according to the mighty working which he showed in Christ, which he wrought in Christ when?

- [10 : 42] When he raised him from the dead. Now just think of that. As far as we are able to think of it without puny minds, without sin affected minds, think of death.

Think of death, physical, spiritual, eternal death. Think of the death that has come into mankind and to the universe of God as we saw last time or sometime before that through the sin of man.

Think of how fast man is bound in death. Think of how death is the wages of sin. think of what is needed to undo that power of death.

Think of what is needed to reverse that. And think of what is needed to bring in an everlasting righteousness in its place. Think of what is necessary to break the bands of the grave.

To plunder death. To overcome him that had the power of death, even the devil. To destroy him. To have in principle truly vanquished him for all eternity.

- [11 : 52] Think of what it means to bear the sin of his people. Think of what it means to bear that sin in a way that can stand and endure the wrath of God and drink in himself that eternal death that you and I deserve without being swallowed up by it in a way that destroys him.

Think of what it means. Think of the power. Think of the almightyness that is needed to do that. And you have some idea of what is going on in the heart of the people of God.

Because it is that working which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. That is the work that is going on that is continuously going on that is actively going on in the hearts of the people of God.

That is what is tonight enabling the people of God to fight against sin. That is what is enabling them to take on the flesh in a real and active combat in a combat that is unto death.

And it has to be unto death. Because if it is not unto death then there is no victory ultimately for the believer. And the believer must achieve that victory albeit in Christ but it must be ours in Christ.

- [13 : 18] And you must mortify by the spirit the deeds of the body. What does it mean to mortify them by the spirit? It means to mortify them by the power that sanctifies by the power that is at work in you by the power of God that is seen elsewhere that provides the pattern for you where you can see what is happening in your heart.

That's how the devil is resisted. That's how sin is overcome. That's how the mastery of sin is broken. That's how the body of death is more and more something.

The Bible tells us that the believer actually dies too and more and more lives to righteousness. They are enabled to do that.

How are they enabled? They are enabled by this particular fact of God working in you. It is God who is at work in you.

What kind of work is he working in? It's the work that is seen and demonstrated in the spoiling of death in the resurrection of Christ. That's what's happening and that's what's happening in all who are Christ's and the Bible would have us believe it and accept it and live by it that it is impossible for any who are truly in Christ not to be sanctified, not to have this work of God taking place continuously and effectively and thoroughly in them.

[15 : 01] But there is the other reference you remember just to give us another insight into this working, this working that is yet to be demonstrated. Who shall change our vile body or the body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.

What is it according to? It's according to this working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. Now you think tonight of how powerless you and I feel and are in the presence of the huge structures of society and of humanity and of the universe.

Who can take that physical creation and burn it with fervent heat? Who can make it fold up as the page of a book and flee from the presence of his face?

Who can take all the structures of the world as we know it with all the powerful institutions of the world that grind defenseless men into the dust? Who can take all of that and dismantle it?

Who can take all of that in his own hand and pull it to the ground and bring it to nothing? Who's going to do that? The Lord. He will do that.

[16 : 29] Yes, He will do that. Because He's going to subdue all things unto Himself. And there will not be an iota of the universe that will not be in submission to Himself.

We saw that last time. We saw that not last time but when we were looking at an earlier passage. That every tongue should confess that everything in heaven and earth and under the earth should bow to the name of Jesus.

And Jesus is coming with this power. With the power that's going to bring everything as we know it to an end. With the power that's going to establish this eternal kingdom.

The power that will forevermore establish that kingdom. Where His people will forevermore with Him enjoy His presence and His power in their lives forevermore perfectly.

And all else shall be outside banished and put out with into the place reserved for the devil and his angels.

[17 : 38] And it is as certain as you and I are here tonight that that is what awaits this world. it is according to that power.

Think of the power that can do and will do that. And you get some idea of the power that is now working in the hearts of the people of God. Because it's according to that.

As it's according to the resurrection of Christ. It is God who is working in you both to will and to do the working that is continuous. The working that is thorough.

And it's thorough to the extent you notice as it says to will and to do of his good flesh. Now the biggest problem that you and I have as sinners is the matter of our will.

Because it is in the will that part of our spirit that part of our persons that will that belongs to each of us it is that will that lies behind all our doings.

[18 : 51] And that will is in its natural state under the bondage of sin. It is enslaved to sin. And it needs to be released from that slavery to sin.

And it can only be released effectively from that enslavement to sin by being renewed. food. You see it is possible to have a certain amount of reformation in your life.

But that is very different from transformation of life. Even out of your reason, your natural thinking or something of the emotive things of your heart, you might be able, even out of reason or out of conscience or something like that, to give something to someone that you really despise.

But that will never by itself turn your hatred or despising into one will. Even out of a sense of reward, you can give yourself to serving God.

But that by itself ever does nothing but a sense of duty or a sense of impelling conscience, that by itself of that natural reasoning, while it may give you some place in what you imagine is the service of God, it is not something that will make the service of God a delight for you, is it?

[20 : 27] No, that can only be by your whole will being renewed. And that is precisely what God does. He gives us a new will, he renews our will.

You remember the Catechism 31, effectual calling, what is it? It is, he says, this effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit.

By convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds and the knowledge of Christ and renewing our will.

Then what? He does persuade and enable us to embrace Christ as he is freely offered in the Gospel. How do we embrace Christ?

How do we bring Christ into our possession? How does our faith reach out to take hold of Christ, to bring him into our possession, to make him our own personal saviour?

[21 : 28] Is it against your will? Of course it isn't. you willfully take him because you take him with a renewed will. He makes a people willing in a day of his power.

And if anyone says, I took Christ into my possession against my will, I was pushed into it, I didn't do it willfully, but I believe I did it.

No, you didn't do it at all. unless you did it willfully, unless your heart goes out to him to embrace him, unless your will goes out willingly towards him, then you have not got him at all, fully, effectively, saving.

Because God renews the will, and in renewing the will, the will immediately responds, and in response of a renewed will, there is an embrace willingly of Christ in the gospel.

It is God who is at work. You see how thorough it is? It goes right to the deepest, to the most needy part of the soul. It renews the will, and in renewing the will, it enables the doing.

[22 : 51] And you see how he puts it? it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. It isn't that he gives you a will without the capacity to do.

And it isn't that he gives you the doing without a corresponding will. They're both there together. The will and the doing. The will to do and the capacity to do what you will.

They are both involved. in this great work of God. And you see that goes on. It is God who is at work in you, who is continuously at work in you, to enable you continuously to will and continuously to do, to continuously will the things that are for salvation, to embrace more and more of what you have brought to you in Christ, to appreciate more and more, and to do all that is necessary in the working out that we mentioned in the previous verse.

So there is the effectiveness of this work of God in the continuousness of it, the effectiveness in the thoroughness of it, extending to the will and to the doing.

What then, in leaving this point, can we say, we make use, how can we make use of that teaching? To what practical importance is this pointing us this evening?

[24 : 21] Well, there are three things very briefly. First of all, it is to the, surely to the great comfort of the Christian. Here you are with Satan's buffeting, with his suggestions, with his vile suggestions implanted in your heart.

Here you are with Satan saying to you, that with all that you have in your life, while you may imagine that you have trusted the Lord, while you have been going to his table for years, yet with all that you have in your life tonight, how can you be a child of God?

How can you be a child of God when you're so fabulous, you know others that you see ahead of you in the way that leads to glory? Take this, Lord, in this face.

Resist him steadfast in faith with these facts, with these facts of redemption that God is demonstrating to you, which says that this is the foundation on which you're building, not your own sense of comfort, not your own sense of sin, not your own fact of praying or any of these things, but the fact that you are fully persuaded that God is working, and that in that working, in that working is the foundation foundation for all that you hope yet to be.

It is God who is at work in me, and it is in the work of God you can tell, Satan, that your hope lies not in your own. It is to the comfort of the people of God.

[26 : 05] How little comfort would there be for you and I tonight? Without continuance in sanctification, if our perseverance in it was dependent upon our own working out.

Or if this work of God at work in us was dependent on our own working out, if it was suspended on our own working out, oh how little certainty, not how little certainty at all, but how certain we would be a failure.

How certain you would be of being overtaken by sin, of making shipwreck of your feet, none of these things would be certain for you at all, that God is saying are secure and certain in this, that it is he who is working in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

And don't be taken aside by any that might suggest to you that it's really experience and it's really emotions that come. these things in their own place are important and significant, but they can never take the place of this.

They can never take the foundational place in the lives of the people of God. The foundation is Christ as an atoning ransom.

[27 : 28] The whole Christ that we spoke of this morning and all that comes along with him, and this is one of those things, one of the great prominent things that comes along with him, this spirit of God that is working in the hearts of the Lord's people.

He has actually achieved, he has purchased that as one of the great gifts of your redemption. You are sealed by that. It is the earnest, as Paul puts it in Ephesians 1, until the redemption of the purchased possession, until we actually have fully for ourselves this great glory, this inheritance in the full that God has reserved for us.

until that time, you have a deposit, you have a pledge, you have a sure pledge. Where is it? It is in the spirit of God, it is in the spirit that is working, it is in God working in you, both to will and to do of his good flesh.

It is for the comfort of the people of God and their temptations. It is secondly, in our use of it, designed so as we may use it, that we may be all the more careful not to grieve his spirit.

Now we have to be careful in distinctions here. in grieving his spirit, we have removed from us by our own misconduct or through our own misconduct, the sense of his presence, the sense of his being with us, working in us.

[29 : 03] Though we've said and we maintain and we insist that God is never thwarted in his work of sanctification. salvation. But let us not imagine that that means it is impossible not to have the sense and the comfort of the spirit actually with us.

Clouded eclipse through our own sinfulness and forgetfulness. Let me remind you of what the confession of faith says on the chapter of the perseverance of the saints.

The first paragraph says this, they whom God has accepted in his beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved.

You cannot get much more definite than that. And yet the third paragraph of that chapter says, nevertheless they may through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins and for a time continue therein whereby they incur God's displeasure and grieve his Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalise others and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.

When we're saying God is working in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure, that does not mean we are saying it is impossible for us to neglect the means of our preservation, to become lazy in our Bible reading, to become indifferent to private prayer, to become lazy in attendance at the means of grace, to devalue these means of our preservation, these means of God's grace.

[31 : 23] It is not impossible at all, it is eminently possible. And the confession reminds us that that leads to the displeasure of the Lord upon us.

And the displeasure of the Lord upon us means that for a time we may come to be deprived of this measure of our grace and our comfort and so on.

So that when God is saying to us, I am at work in my people both to will and to do, it's not for our indolence, it's not for our ceasing to see the significance of verse 12 or to diminish its importance but so that it will add to our vigour, that it will add to our watchfulness.

Isn't that why the Bible consistently gives us exhortations addressed to faith? And addressed to faith in the following terms, for example, watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.

Take heed lest ye lose those things that you have acquired. Take heed, watch. All of these things are addressed to the people of God.

[32 : 47] Though it is foundational in their experience that God is working in you, it does not lead to slothfulness, it must not lead to carelessness, it must lead more and more to concern and to carefulness in the working out of our own salvation with fear and trembling that we grieve not his spirit, that we come more and more to the possession of increasing assurance hope and good hope and good hope to the end.

And thirdly, finally on this first point, this is useful to the people of God because surely it brings us to desire more of Christ.

Christ. And that surely as much as anything else is the use to which we must put this in our own experience. To desire more of this Christ, again going into chapter three, anticipating what Paul says there, this excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and to count them but done, that I may win Christ and be found in him, that I may know him, that I may continue to know him and may continue to know the power of his resurrection.

You see, he says, the excellency of the knowledge. He doesn't say the exclusiveness of the knowledge, as if there was no more knowledge ahead of him, as if the knowledge of Christ was not to be imparted to all subjects for Paul's consideration.

The more he knows of him, the more he wants of him. The more he knows of him, the more he understands is yet to be known often.

- [34 : 37] The more he realizes how much lies beyond his present understanding often. Surely no one here tonight is going to say, I am satisfied with the level of knowledge that I have of Christ.

Surely you're not going to say that what you know of Christ is sufficient for you. Surely you're not going to say tonight that your desire is not for more of Christ. Surely you're not saying that tonight you know Christ and are yet happy to be there where you're rich in your knowledge of him without aiming at a higher and a deeper and a greater knowledge of him.

To know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings. this effective work of God should be for us something that leads to more desire after Christ.

After this great Savior. After the one we saw this morning as the beloved of his church. The effectiveness then of this sanctifying work of God in its continuance in its thoroughness and our use of it in these ways that we have elaborated.

The time is gone. We said that there was also the matter of the sovereignty of the world. Just in a word it is to will and to do of his good pleasures.

- [36 : 14] Why does he deal with us in the way that he does? Why does he hurt? Why does he fashion us? Why does he take this way that he takes with us?

Why does he cause these things in our lives? Why does he take this particular direction with me with you you might be saying of yourself? Why has he loved me as he has?

Oh why why has he given Christ to me at all? Why has he bothered? Why sinned with me yet? Why has he come into my life?

Why should I be so privileged? That God should unwrought this work that sanctifies me. Why did he love me and give himself for me?

because of his good flesh we cannot get beyond but above that he loves us because he loves us.

- [37 : 26] His love is the deepest of all and you cannot get beyond it. and he loves us according to his good pleasure and he sanctifies according to his good pleasure he does it as it pleases him because it has pleased him because it was pleasing in sight.

It is the logical sovereignty of sovereign love and there is no reasoning that you can use beyond that you have to leave it there.

But in leaving it there isn't that itself your greatest comfort also that it is everlasting love that has embraced you.

Isn't the assurance that it will never end found in the fact that it had no beginning. I have loved you with an everlasting love.

If that is love that has embraced you now and continues to work out this sanctifying power in your heart oh doesn't that itself supposing there was nothing else to deal with but that doesn't that itself assure you that he will bring you to his designed place for and that nothing in this life will frustrate the work that God is working in the hearts of his people.

- [38 : 55] It is for all of us to address tonight whether this is the work going on in our hearts because you see there are only two alternatives as we stress so often if it is not God who is at work in your heart oh dear friend who is at work in your heart surely the answer is not far away isn't it the evil one isn't it the workings of sin doesn't Paul himself demonstrate so clearly following the teaching of Jesus himself whoever it is you are servant to his servant to I of sin unto death or else of righteousness unto life of Christ or of

Satan who is your governor who is working in your heart is it the dark the deadly the awful the sinful the hell intending work of the devil it must be if it is not the work of the sanctifying God why should it be like that why should it not be the work of Christ is it isn't he saying to you again tonight come to me and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you and you shall find peace for your soul and you shall find power and you shall find sanctifying energy to deal with all the issues that are necessary in your life because you see in bringing these two verses together just to to close our study the people of God will one day look back on what is the substance of these two verses as they reflect on the wilderness journey that they passed through in this world and they will say that work made me but I know that there was a man a long time ago of the name of

William Wickham who was given a commission to build a chapel for one of the kings of England and when he was finished he wrote in the windowsill of the chapel he engraved there this work made William Wickham and the king rebuked him he said you shouldn't have written that you shouldn't have given the impression that all this is your work oh he says that is not what I meant by the inscription I didn't mean William Wickham made this work I made I meant this work made William Wickham because before my commission to build it I was poor I didn't have enough to feed my family I didn't see myself at all for what I was this work made and the people of

God are going to look back and they're going to inscribe in their lives at the end of it all this inscription this work made me what I am work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is working in both to will and to do of his good pleasure let's pray we give thanks Lord our God for all that is foundational in thy work and we pray that thou would direct our minds to consider all the more all the certainty of thy work and to consider it in these things we have the basis of our own progression in holy things do thou fill us Lord with thy spirit for thou hast promised thy holy spirit to them that come before thee seeking as thy children and we pray that thy spirit may continue not only to work in the hearts of all thy people but also may bring to our notice an assurance that such is indeed our condition and

O Lord do thou fill a mind with that which would give us stability of heart and of conscience that we may know that in thy working in us is that power that will see us through the glory be pleased we pray to bless any whose hearts are void of this work and and in the glorious name of our redeemer and our saviour in whom thou will receive honour and glory now and ever more amen to leisten you allow to thank you with yak stomach that

[45 : 24] You