

Work Out Your Own Salvation

"So, then my beloved, even as ye 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 worketh in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12).

The affection Paul held for these brethren is evident in his frequent expressions of endearment for them thus we see in this passage his words, *"My beloved brethren"* and in chapter 4:1: *"My brethren beloved and loved for, my joy and my crown."* Because of the care and love he had for them, are we should surprised he urged them to *"work out your own salvation"*? These were brethren, saints, lights in the world. Nevertheless, they were to *"work out their own salvation."* These words neither imply 1) they could devise their own scheme to save themselves nor 2) they could "earn" their salvation by an abundance of good deeds. The passage does imply that salvation, whether from alien sins or those committed after obeying the gospel, demands activity on the part of any who seeks *"salvation."* There is a doctrine which affirms that the sinner is wholly passive in salvation -- that it is only God who is active. The doctrine states that 1) God has selected those whom He wills to be saved and 2) in His own time He sends His Holy Spirit into the hearts of the elect so that they may believe; thus be saved. This doctrine is false from two major flaws.

First, God is no respecter of persons. This truth was affirmed by Peter when he was in Caesarea, preaching to Cornelius' house. Paul likewise stated this premise several times, saying in Romans 2:11, *"For there is no respect of persons with God."* No matter "how you cut it" if man is wholly passive in salvation -- if God must do it all, then those not saved are lost because God passed them by. Such would make Him a respect of persons.

The second flaw in the theory that man is wholly passive in his redemption is shown by the many, many passages which demand activity on the sinner's part. In the parable of the two builders, the wise builder was he who heard and did the words of Christ. The foolish builder was he who heard and did not do the words of Christ (Matt. 7:24-27). Prefacing the parable of the two builders were Jesus' words: *"Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 7:21) Luke's account puts it this way: *"And why call ye me Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say?"* (Lk. 6:46). Inquiring believers on Pentecost asked, *"Brethren what shall we do?"* to which Peter responded, *"Repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins"* (Acts 2:37-38). Awed

by the vision he had seen in Joppa (along with Cornelius' citation of the angel's instructions to him to send for Peter), Peter declared, "*Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him*" (Acts 10:34f). From a conscious smitten heart, Saul asked, "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" The Lord's answer which came was, "*Arise and enter into the city and it shall be told thee of all things which thou must do*" (Acts 9:6). Those who teach man is wholly passive in salvation, do so in the face of dozens of passages to the contrary.

Man must continue to be active in his salvation. The parable of the talents well illustrates this point. A man (Christ) going into a far country (heaven) called his servants (Christians) unto them and delivered unto them his goods (Mt. 25:14). To one he gave five talents and he traded with them (he was active) and gained five other talents. To another the master gave two talents and he in like manner traded with them (he was active) and gained two others. To one was given one talent, which he hid (he was inactive) and gained nothing. Two servants were saved. One was lost -- lost because he did not work out his own salvation! This following quote is sometimes found the brethren's buildings: "Enter to worship. Depart to serve." May it be so with all of us.

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