



How should we respond to Jesus’s Lordship being displayed in His salvation? Pastor leads his family in today’s “Hopewell @Home” passage. Philippians 2:12–13 prepares us for the evening sermon on the coming Lord’s Day. In these two verses of Sacred Scripture, we learn to pursue holiness with the right fear (for God’s eyes, not men), and with great fear (trembling at the greatness of what is being done as we are sanctified), and with great confidence (knowing that the God for Whose glory we pursue holiness is the God by Whose grace we pursue holiness).

Friday, April 16, 2021 • Read Philippians 2:12–13

Questions from the Scripture text: How does the apostle connect v12 to v13? What does he call them here? What have the Philippians always done? Under what circumstances? What are they to do? in what manner? Why (v13)? Who works where? To do what two things? For what?

How should our lives respond to the fact “that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the father”? We know what knees should do: bow. We know what tongues should do: confess. What should “beloved” (v12) believers do? Work out our salvation. “Therefore” at the beginning of v12 connects back to the exaltation of the risen Christ. “Therefore ... work out your own salvation.”

Salvation, of course, is much bigger than mere justification, which is the word that means to come into a right standing before the justice of God. This happens the moment that we believe. But Christ’s salvation includes perfect holiness and blessedness. “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep *for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed*” (Rom 13:11, emphasis added).

In justification, our part is literally to not work, but trust Him who justifies the ungodly (cf. Rom 4:5). But the rest of our salvation must be worked out—or rather worked “in” as more literally translated. Our little text tells us several things about this working that the Spirit here commands.

Work out your salvation with the right fear. From our infancy we have learned to obey out of fear. Fear of displeasing a parent. Fear of consequences. Fear of punishment. Fear of being thought less-of by others. The apostle knows that even after we are converted, we are tempted to keep operating this way. He knows that there are members of the Philippian church (probably all of them!) who are on their best behavior when the apostle is around.

So, he tells them to do the reverse. When he says “much more in my absence,” he is not saying that they should be lax about obedience when he is present. But since he knows that it requires more effort when “only” God is looking, the apostle counsels his beloved ones to focus all the more effort in his absence.

When others aren’t there to see us, we should work all the harder at what pleases God, because it is then that it is *for His eyes alone* that we are working.

Work out your salvation with great fear. One of the ways that we will know that it is fear of God that drives us is when this fear makes us to tremble. Work out your own salvation with fear “and trembling.”

We rather easily lie to ourselves about what is going on in our hearts. It is an easy thing to play mind-games with myself, to think that I am doing something unto God and conjure up some feelings as if that were the case. The apostle knew that, and so the Spirit carries him along to say not just “with fear” but also “with trembling.” If it is the true and living God Whom we are fearing, we will tremble. Yes, we can imitate trembling too. But of this we can be sure: if there is no trembling, then it is not God Whom we are fearing.

Work out your salvation with great confidence. Playacting at Christianity to be seen by others harms us in more ways than just by feeding spiritual self-deception. Spiritual self-deception is a great evil indeed; but its twin, spiritual self-dependence, is just as toxic and poisonous and deadly to the soul.

But the self-deception leads to the self-dependence because it hides from our view the true and living God Who is our only power for growth in grace, our only hope for growth in grace. “Don’t live out your walk for the eye of man!” says the apostle. Not only because you will fail to pursue true godliness, heart godliness, persistent godliness.

But also because if you are not consciously considering the eye of God, you will take your own eyes off of Him “Who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” See how entirely your walk with Him must come from Him? It is not even that we are willing but unable to do. Without Him, we are unable even to desire and intend that which is truly good.

Apart from God, sanctification is stillborn—dead even in the heart, lacking the opportunity to be born in our words or our deeds. God provides even the willing to do! So let us look to Him, that His smile upon our thoughts and deeds would be infinitely more to us than any approval of any mere man—knowing that He first smiles to work in us, and then smiles upon that work!

Whose earthly approval means the most to you? When do you need to “much more” work out your own salvation? In order to respond properly to the fact that it is God Who must work in you for all of your growth in grace, what other things must you “do” as you grow?

Suggested songs: ARP32AB “What Blessedness” or TPH393 “Spirit of God, Dwell Thou within My Heart”

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