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**God’s call to all Christians: Grow in Christ**

Most believers are familiar with terms such as the general call of the gospel, an invitation, or an altar call. These terms rightly understood indicate something about God. He draws attention to Himself and what He has in store for His people. He does not restrict His kingdom to a class, race, country or nation (Rev. 5:9-11). Most people connect God’s call to the urgency and necessity of salvation.

There is another call from God that we encounter in Philippians 2:12-13*: Therefore, my dear friends, as you always have obeyed – not only in my presence but in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and act according to his good purpose*. Here Paul captures God’s call for growth in Christlikeness. Paul is speaking to believers – saved people. He makes clear that salvation carries with it duty but also privilege and blessing. His statement, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, forced his readers to consider what salvation is, and what they were to think, to desire, and to do as saved people. Since the whole person is changed at salvation, Paul encouraged his readers in the joy of their salvation – thinking God’s thoughts, desiring what God desires, and doing what pleases God.

Working out one’s salvation (or solutions to problems which every church and every individual has) requires human individual effort. The believer is to be God’s agent to accomplish God’s goal of becoming more like Christ, individually and corporately. Paul is reminding his readers that at regeneration they were supernaturally and radically changed (John 3:3-8). They had become like Christ in principle but not in practice. Prior to God’s saving work they lived in God’s world as if it was their own. They had created their own world – a virtual reality – based on their own self-pleasing thoughts and desires. In their own world (the "you" and the lifestyle before salvation), they habitually opposed God in varying degrees and in a variety of ways. Such is the depths of the cesspool of wickedness from which every believer has come (Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 3:9-19; 8:5-8). The bad news is truly horrible. However, the good news (salvation) is surpassingly and incredibly wonderful!

Paul was issuing a call to progressive sanctification – personal holiness. He called his people to holiness and not happiness. Happiness depends on circumstances and holiness depends on a person's response to the God of circumstances. Paul called for a renewal and not relief, and progress not self-pleasure. He called them, in part, to be changing, because they were the most changed people in the universe and God was not through with His people.

What are some reasons a person would not work out his salvation? It may be ignorance. Some may simply “think” *life* is about salvation and nothing more. They may go to church, pray, tithe, and even evangelize. The Pharisees did all of those things. Some may not know change is a fundamental characteristic of the Christian. Some may not know how to change. Another reason for not working out one's salvation may be the person’s divided heart (James 1:5-8; 4:8). The person may still yearn for his previous self-pleasing lifestyle. A common feature of these reasons is ignorance of both the good news and the bad news.

Believer, it is always wise to remember what salvation is in terms of being saved from what and from who AND saved for what and by whom. In order to accomplish this, you must remember what you were in Satan - you were outside of Christ without hope. You are must remember what you are in Christ. Reflect on who you are saved from - God as Judge, self, Satan, and sin. Yet, you were saved by God for Him. Also remember and reflect on the cost of salvation – to God. Focus on the privilege and blessing of salvation that leads to working out your own salvation with fear and trembling. When you do you will be tasting the goodness of God (Ps. 34:8)

**Application**:

1. Review salvation as given above.

2. Ask yourself: what is the “big deal” about salvation? What do you learn about God and about yourself.

3. Write out specific ways you will work out your salvation – what that will look like in terms of changing thinking, wanting, and doing.