

## A Tale of Two Workers

### Philippians 2:12-18

In this passage Paul argues against two common errors in the Christian life (to sit back and think we don't have to do anything; or to think we have to work for our salvation) and instead shows us a much better path to joy and deep inner happiness.

#### **Work it Out**

Given all that Jesus has done for us, Paul says there are implications for how we live our lives, and it's not that we just sit back and do nothing. Instead we are to walk in obedience to Christ and work out our salvation, to apply ourselves and take effort to grow in Christian maturity.

But that does not mean we work *for* our salvation, or try to earn God's favour. Rather, having been loved and accepted by God because of Christ, we live out the implications of that in our daily lives. And we are each responsible for ourselves – whilst we are to look out for one another, there can be no finger-pointing. We are also to do this 'with fear and trembling'. We should be serious about growing in holiness, because God is holy.

#### **Because it's God who's at work**

But Paul also says we can only work this salvation *out*, because God is working this salvation *in* us. He gives us these desires to do what pleases him, and empowers us to carry it out.

That means that even when we are growing in Christian maturity it is no reason to boast. Instead it is a reason for even greater humility, as it is God doing it in us.

#### **Because Relationships Matter**

Paul gives one specific area where we are to work out this salvation: in our relationships. There can be no grumbling or complaining. We grumble and complain when we think we should be treated better than we are. But when we look at the cross we can see that God could not demonstrate his love for us more clearly, nor treat us any better than he has treated us. So we have no grounds to grumble, instead we can show the same kind of grace to others as God has shown to us.

And Paul says working out our salvation, and letting it influence our relationships matters for three reasons:

Firstly, it matters **for the sake of others**: the world needs to see the light of the gospel in our lives. If we are fighting one another they won't see that light.

Secondly, it matters **for the sake of eternity**: Paul wants these Philippians relationships to reflect all the grace that God has shown them in Christ. He wants to be able to be like a proud father on Judgment Day, because if they allow the gospel of Jesus to permeate their relationships it will be proof that God is at work in their lives, and that means Paul won't have spent his life in vain.

Thirdly, it matters **for your joy**. We won't find real joy all the time we are putting our self at the center. Paul found joy in knowing Christ's sacrifice for him and in sacrificing himself for others, and we can know the same for ourselves.