

A Discussion Regarding Philippians 2:12 : Part 1

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Be Spirit-Led In Understanding The Scriptures, Our Promised Teacher Is The Holy Spirit, Widespread Belief In A Doctrine Doesn't Make It True, Bereans Validated Paul's Teachings By Searching The Scriptures, Test All Doctrines Against God's Word, Divine Inspiration Of God's Word, Genesis: Satan Has Twisted And Perverted God's Word Since The Very Beginning, Apostles Engaged In Continual War Against False Doctrines And False Brethren, Philippians 2:12, Novices And Spiritual Babes, Jesus Withheld Difficult Things From The Apostles, Jesus Rebukes Peter, Some Things Are Not Meant For Babes In Christ, Babes Should Not Be Teaching Meatier Matters Which They Do Not Properly Understand, A Lot Of Misinterpretation And Deception On The Social Networks, Wresting The Scriptures To Their Own Destruction, Apostle Paul Believed In Salvation By Grace Alone Through Faith In Jesus Christ, We Are Sinners And Have No Righteousness Of Our Own, Works Cannot Save Us, Justified And Made Righteous Through Christ Alone, We Cannot Be Double-Minded When It Comes To The Issue Of Our Salvation, Salvation Through Our Own Works Is A Doctrine Of Devils, Any Seeming Contradiction In God's Word Results From Our Own Lack Of Proper Understanding, God Is Not The Author Of Confusion

If there is one important lesson which I have emphasized over and over again since I first began my online writing ministry so many years ago, it is that when it comes to the study of God's Word, we must not rely solely upon our own human wisdom and understanding in order to grasp its true meaning; because if we do, it's quite possible that we'll eventually fall into doctrinal error. Worse yet, we could even begin propagating those same doctrinal errors to other folks who are within our circle. Rather, we must ask God for His Wisdom, and be led by His Spirit in our understanding of His precious Word. In fact, if we delve into the Scriptures, we discover that this is one of the big reasons why the Holy Spirit was given to people in the first place. Consider the following group of verses:

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, HE SHALL TEACH YOU ALL THINGS, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 14:26, KJV

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, HE WILL GUIDE YOU INTO ALL TRUTH: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

John 16:13, KJV

"For as many as are LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, they are the sons of God."

Romans 8:14, KJV

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

1 Corinthians 2:14, KJV

"If any of you lack wisdom, LET HIM ASK OF GOD, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

James 1:5, KJV

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

Luke 11:13, KJV

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

Psalms 119:18, KJV

You need to understand that just because a certain pastor or minister is teaching a particular doctrine, or just because an entire church or denomination believes a certain doctrine, does NOT necessarily make it true. That teaching could STILL be a doctrine of devils which does NOT align with the Word of God. So, as I have pointed out on many previous occasions, it is imperative that we look directly to God's Word in order to determine whether or not what we are being told or taught is indeed true, and validated by the Scriptures. As you may know, this is precisely what the wise people of Berea did when the Apostle Paul and Silas came preaching the Gospel to them in the Book of Acts, as we see by the following two verses:

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

Acts 17:10-11, KJV

Think about that for a moment. As sadly occurs many times in our modern day to our own spiritual detriment, the people of Berea could have simply adopted a lackadaisical attitude and said to themselves, "Oh, this is the great Apostle Paul. He knows what he is talking about." But they did not do that, did they? Instead, they conferred with the Scriptures. They wanted to make certain that what Paul and Silas were telling them was Scripturally sound. Oh that more people today would do the very same thing, instead of being deceived by wolves in sheep's clothing! To reiterate, we must diligently study God's Word and search the Scriptures, and we must test, try or prove what we are being taught, to make certain that it is firmly based upon Biblical truth. Consider the following set of verses which likewise confirm this important point:

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

2 Timothy 2:15, KJV

"Prove [test, examine] all things; hold fast that which is good."

1 Thessalonians 5:21, KJV

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

John 5:39, KJV

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

1 John 4:1, KJV

Now, some foolish people who lack the Spirit of God may come to question my position, and ask why we should even do this. Why test against the Scriptures? Well, the answer is quite simple. Because the Scriptures are Divinely Inspired, as we can determine by these two verses:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"

2 Timothy 3:16, KJV

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

2 Peter 1:21, KJV

As I said a moment ago, it is because many modern Christians fail to do this, because they don't take the time to really examine what they are being taught by their church, minister or pastor, that they have fallen into some serious doctrinal errors, some of which I discuss in other Bill's Bible Basics articles. Of course, this is nothing new. The Devil has been doing all he can to pervert and corrupt God's Word since the very beginning in the Garden of Eden when he said "Hath God said," as we see by this well-known verse:

"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

Genesis 3:1, KJV

As I have likewise discussed before, it was the same thing during the First Century. There is clear Scriptural evidence which indicates that the Apostles engaged in a continual war against the false doctrines and false brethren which crept into the Early Church, as we can easily determine by this group of verses:

"Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

Matthew 16:12, KJV

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"

Ephesians 4:14-15, KJV

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For

it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."

Hebrews 13:9, KJV

"As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do."

1 Timothy 1:3-4, KJV

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;"

1 Timothy 4:1-2, KJV

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."

1 Timothy 6:3-5, KJV

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"

2 Timothy 4:3, KJV

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him . . . For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15, KJV

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Galatians 1:6-9, KJV

"And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:"

Galatians 2:4, KJV

"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision."

Philippians 3:2, KJV

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

Acts 20:28-30, KJV

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

Romans 16:17, KJV

"But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."

Titus 3:9-11, KJV

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

2 Peter 2:1-2, KJV

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

1 John 2:18-19, KJV

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

2 John 1:9-11, KJV

Having now established a clear Scriptural baseline for this article, let us get to the meat of the matter. There is a verse which has caused a considerable amount of trouble for some Christians. It is not that there is anything wrong with the verse itself. Rather, it is in the way that some people have chosen interpret it. That verse is the following:

"Wherefore, my beloved, 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."

Philippians 2:12, KJV

Taken by itself, this verse from the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the brethren at Philippi can be dangerous in the hands of novices. That is to say, in the hands of babes in Christ who are not skilled with the Word of God. Again, this problem is evident in the writings of the Apostles, as we can see by the following set of verses:

"I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able."

1 Corinthians 3:2, KJV

"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Hebrews 5:11-14, KJV

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"

1 Peter 2:2, KJV

"As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

2 Peter 3:16, KJV

In fact, there were some things which even Jesus purposely withheld from His followers, because He realized that they were not yet spiritually mature enough, and ready enough, to understand them, and much less to accept them. That is why on one occasion He said the following to them:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

John 16:12, KJV

A good example of this is when Jesus and the Apostles were near Caesarea Philippi. As you may recall, it was at that time that Jesus began to inform His followers -- to their shock -- that they would go to Jerusalem, where He would be crucified. Of course, as we know from the following group of verses, the Apostle Peter was really taken back by this sad announcement. Thus, he protested strongly to the Lord, only to be rebuked by the same, as we see here:

"From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Matthew 16:21-23, KJV

As you can see, some things are simply not meant for babes in Christ. Not only can they not handle them sometimes, but there are occasions when they aren't even spiritually mature enough to properly understand them. And, of course, if they do not even properly understand such things themselves, then they most certainly should not be trying to teach them to other people, right? Yet sadly, that is EXACTLY what we see happening today in many instances; particularly in online discussions, such as on the social networks. The level of misinterpretation and deception amongst Christian Believers is astounding, shocking and sad. As I have mentioned before, it seems that everyone wants to be an Apostle or a Prophet.

So why do I say that Philippians 2:12 can be dangerous in the hands of novices? Quite simply, because if one doesn't take the time to compare this verse with other verses of Scripture, he could very easily arrive at the erroneous conclusion that Paul is saying that we must work for our Salvation, and merit it through our own good works. This is what the Apostle Peter is referring to when he states that some unlearned people wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. That word "wrest" is derived from the Koine Greek word "strebloo", which means to twist or to pervert. In other words, certain people intentionally or unintentionally twist or pervert the meaning of certain verses so that they support their particular doctrines.

But is that really what the Apostle Paul is stating in Philippians 2:12? Is he actually saying that we must work for our Salvation, and merit it through our own good works? If your answer is "Yes", well my friend, then you have just outright contradicted what Paul writes in other Epistles where he plainly states that we are NOT saved by our own works; that we are all sinners and have NO righteousness of our own; and that it is by God's Grace alone through faith in the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ that we're granted Forgiveness, Remission of our sins, Redemption, Salvation and Eternal Life. Consider the following group of verses which clarify these various points:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Ephesians 2:8-9, KJV

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of

regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"

Titus 3:5, KJV

"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:"

Philippians 3:9, KJV

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

Romans 11:6, KJV

"And by him [Jesus] all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Acts 13:39, KJV

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith."

Romans 3:19-27, KJV

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Romans 10:4, KJV

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of

the law shall no flesh be justified . . . I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Galatians 2:16, 21, KJV

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith."

Galatians 3:11, KJV

"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

Galatians 5:4, KJV

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) . . . That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Romans 5:17, 21, KJV

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Romans 7:4, KJV

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

Romans 8:10, KJV

So let me ask you something. Does it make any sense to you at all that in Philippians 2:12, the Apostle Paul would say that we must work for our Salvation, and then turn around and say the exact opposite in so many other verses? Is Paul just mixed up? Has he had a revelation and suddenly changed his mind about the issue? Is he just doctrinally confused and doesn't know what he is talking about? Is Paul losing it? Yes, I am purposely being a bit sarcastic. Actually, I don't believe any of that to be true. As the Apostle James wrote:

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

James 1:8, KJV

So, no, the Apostle Paul is most certainly NOT being double minded. Neither is he confused about anything. Paul knows

exactly what he is writing. The problem lies with certain people today who interpret the verse in such a way so that it will seem to support their wayward doctrine of Salvation through works, or else Salvation through a combination of Grace and works. Sadly, this doctrine of devils is really prevalent everywhere, and it is dead wrong. As Paul writes, it is either God's Grace, or works, but not both.

As I mention in my 1998 article entitled "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth", whenever there seems to be any kind of contradiction, it is usually not in the Word of God itself, but rather in our personal understanding of the same. The Lord does not contradict Himself. Neither does He purposely confuse us. In fact, we are specifically told by the Apostle Paul in his discussion concerning the Gift of Tongues, that God is not the author of confusion, as we see here:

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

1 Corinthians 14:33, KJV

Please go to part two for the conclusion of this article.

Written by Bill Kochman

wordweaver777@gmail.com

<https://www.billkochman.com>

<https://www.csnet.live>

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A Discussion Regarding Philippians 2:12 : Part 2

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It Is God Who Works Through Us To Perform His Divine Will And Pleasure, Paul Wrote To Christian Believers Who Were Already Saved, Apostle John Wanted His Readers To Know That They Are Already Saved And Have Eternal Life, We Must Demonstrate Our Salvation Through Works Which We Perform For The Lord, Works Are Proof Of Our Salvation But They Are Not What Saves Us To

Begin With, New Creatures In Christ, Faith Without Works Is Dead, A Fruitless Apple Orchard, God Expects Us To Bear Fruit And To Work Diligently For His Kingdom, Different Callings And Ministries In The Body Of Christ, Faithful Servants In God's Kingdom, Freeloaders In The First Century Church, The Early Church's Financial Plan And Communal Sharing, Closing Remarks, Apostle Paul's Example, BBB Suggested Reading List

Continuing our discussion from part one, so if the Apostle Paul is NOT saying that we must work for our own Salvation, then exactly what IS he saying? It should be clear to you by now that whatever is meant by Philippians 2:12, must be in perfect agreement with all of the previous verses which we have already examined. Those verses clearly say that we are not saved by our own works. Therefore, something else must be meant by Philippians 2:12. In fact, if we read the very next verse, Paul's intended meaning becomes clear; at least in my view. Allow me to share those two verses together:

"Wherefore, my beloved, 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 which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Philippians 2:12-13, KJV

The first nail in the coffin regarding this false doctrine is the fact that Paul comes right out and says that it is NOT our own works per se. Rather, it is in fact GOD who is working in us and through us. What is God working through us to do? Again, the verse makes it rather plain when it states God's Will and God's good pleasure. Do you understand now? If not, let me explain further. First of all, remember to whom Paul is writing this Epistle. It is to the Christian Church in Philippi. These are brethren. They are ALREADY Believers. Paul in fact refers to them as "my beloved". In other words, these people are ALREADY saved. As the Apostle John writes:

"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

1 John 5:12-13, KJV

Do you see that? John clearly wants his readers to KNOW that they ALREADY have eternal life NOW, because they believe in Jesus. It is not something to wish for, or to work for in the future. They have already got it by faith through their belief in Christ. In similar fashion, Paul cannot be saying that the brethren at Philippi must work for their Salvation, because they are ALREADY saved by faith. So in my view, and you can take it or leave it, what Paul REALLY seems to be saying is that now that they ARE saved, serve the Lord with fear and trembling. Fulfill God's Will in your lives and do those things which please the Lord. Manifest and demonstrate your Salvation through the good works which you do for the Lord. Witness for the Lord. Win souls for His Kingdom. Teach His sheep. Support His missionaries. Do whatever He's called you to do. Prove that you are truly saved. Don't just say it. Do the work of an evangelist, as in this verse:

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."
2 Timothy 4:5, KJV

In short, as I have explained so many times before, the works which we do for the Lord are the fruits, the results, and the byproduct of our Salvation. They are NOT what save us, but they do prove that we are indeed saved. As Paul writes "make full proof of thy ministry." We do said works because of the fact that we have been saved, and we have been regenerated, transformed, and renewed in our minds, by the Spirit of Christ. We are new creatures in Christ Jesus, with a brand new vision, and new goals in life. Consider the following group of verses:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV

"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."
Ephesians 4:24, KJV

"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:"
Colossians 3:10, KJV

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that

good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Romans 12:2, KJV

In fact, in Philippians 2:12, that phrase "work out" finds its origin in the Koine Greek word "katargazomai", which means to perform, accomplish or achieve. Those are action verbs which result in something being seen and done. It is similar to what the Apostle James wrote in these two verses where he says to show me your faith by your works. Let me see it in your actions and in your lifestyle. Don't just talk. Do the walk:

"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works . . . For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

James 2:17-18, 26, KJV

This is in fact pretty much the same message that I share in articles such as the series "Sluggards and Sloths: Are You Diligent and Faithful in the Affairs of God's Kingdom?", as well as in "The Parable of the Sower: Salvation and Service" and "Are You a Burning Ember for the Lord?". In short, once we are saved, God expects us to work diligently for Him, for the glory of His Kingdom. That is precisely how we can gain Heavenly Rewards. To reiterate, such works do NOT save us, but they most certainly DO show that we are truly saved. If you were to plant an apple orchard, and years later when the trees mature, for some odd reason they don't bear any fruit, how would you feel? Well, God feels the same way when He plants His Spirit in the soil of our flesh -- which Apostle Paul refers to as the "earnest of the Spirit" -- and then we do not bear any fruit for His Kingdom. Consider this group of verses:

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Psalms 1:3, KJV

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."

Proverbs 11:30, KJV

"But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold . . .

But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

Matthew 13:8, 23, KJV

"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

Matthew 13:31-32, KJV

"And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred."

Mark 4:20, KJV

"But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

Luke 8:15, KJV

"He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

Luke 13:6-9, KJV

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

John 12:24, KJV

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the

vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned . . . Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

John 15:1-6, 16, KJV

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Romans 7:4, KJV

So the way that we "work out" our Salvation is by bearing fruit for God's Kingdom in some way. It may not necessarily be in the form of winning souls to Christ. After all, the Body of Christ is made up of many members, and each member has their own gifts, calling and ministry. Not everyone is called to be an evangelist, or a teacher, or a prophet. It is up to each one of us to determine through personal prayer and carefully studying God's Word, what His calling is for our lives. It is not the same for everyone. But whatever it is, we must do it faithfully, diligently and consistently, and with fear and trembling. That is the gist of the matter, in my humble opinion. Let me share a few more verses with you regarding the subject of faithfulness:

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?"

Matthew 24:45, KJV

"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Matthew 25:21, KJV

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, how will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is

another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"

Luke 16:10-12, KJV

"And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities."

Luke 19:17, KJV

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

1 Corinthians 4:2, KJV

One question which arises in my mind is why Paul and James felt compelled to bring up this issue regarding demonstrating our faith by our works. Well, one reason -- which is in fact confirmed by the Scriptures -- is that some of the brethren were apparently being rather lazy. They were being slothful in the Lord's Business, and they were not doing their share of the work. They were freeloaders. They were just sliding by. This fact becomes evident in such New Testament verses as the following:

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any mans bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, KJV

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;"

Romans 12:11, KJV

"And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Hebrews 6:11-12, KJV

I mean think about it. According to the Book of Acts, from the day of Pentecost and forward, the Apostles were literally winning souls and converts by the thousands. Not only that, but the most dedicated ones were forsaking all and bringing their possessions -- or the money from their possessions -- to the Apostles, so that distribution could then be made according to the need of each member. This communal manner of living becomes evident by verses such as the following:

"And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

Acts 2:44-45, KJV

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common . . . Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

Acts 4:32, 34-35, KJV

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack."

2 Corinthians 8:9-15, KJV

Now think how easy it must have been for a shrewd person to more or less hide amongst so great a multitude of Christian Believers, enjoying the benefits which the Church offered, without having to lift a finger . . . well, at least until they were discovered by the Apostles! So the Apostles wanted the brethren to know that being a part of the Lord's Church was not just a free ride with free room and board. In other words, once saved, everyone was expected to do their part to advance the Kingdom of God, in whatever capacity they were assigned by the Church Elders. In this way they would indeed "work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling", and "with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."

In conclusion, you cannot take one verse -- Philippians 2:12 -- and insist that in it Paul is saying that we must work for our Salvation, while purposely ignoring all of the other verses where he says the exact opposite. As I have already made clear, yes, we must indeed work. However, it is not so that we can merit or gain Salvation. Rather, we work because we love the Lord, and because we want to help bring others into His Kingdom. As a result of doing this, we will have rewards in Heaven. And by the way, if there is anyone who demonstrated their faith by their works, it was certainly the Apostle Paul. As he writes in his second Epistle to the Corinthian brethren:

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

2 Corinthians 11:23-27, KJV

With these thoughts I will bring this article to a close. I hope that you have found it informative, and I pray that it has been a blessing and an inspiration in your life. If you have been a bit lazy with regards to the affairs of God's Kingdom, I hope that this article will motivate you to try to do better for the Lord. If you have enjoyed reading this

article, please consider sharing its URL with your online friends. Likewise, if you happen to have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or with any other social network, I would also appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information and further study, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this article, or which contain topics that are related to this article. All of them are also located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server:

A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: God's Promise of the Spirit
Are You a Burning Ember for the Lord?
Are You Saved and Sealed and Healed and Filled?
Dead to the Law: God's Laws Written on Our Hearts
Free From the Fear of Death: Law and Works vs Grace
Humility in Our Understand of God's Word
Message to the World
Modern False Prophets and Worldly Ecumenism
OSAS: Are We Once Saved, Always Saved?
OSAS: The Hebrews 10:26-27 Controversy
Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Salvation is Free Through Jesus Christ
Sluggards and Sloths: Are You Diligent and Faithful?
Striving for Perfection: Are You a Sinless Saint?
The Office of Prophets and Teachers
The Parable of the Sower: Salvation and Service
What is God's Will for My Life?

Written by Bill Kochman

wordweaver777@gmail.com
<https://www.billkochman.com>
<https://www.csnet.live>

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