

1. The Gospel of Jesus Calls Us to Continual Obedience

- a. The Gospel is the reason for obedience
 - i. Another Therefore - "because of this" THE GOSPEL
 1. We tend to put the cart before the horse
 - a. Obey and then Jesus helps you
 2. The gospel is: Jesus works and then we obey in grateful response of worship
 - a. His performance leads to our performance
 - b. His humility leads to our humility
 - c. His love leads to our love
 - ii. The self-abasement and super-exaltation of Jesus
 1. Obedience to the Cross
 2. Exaltation due to His obedience
 - iii. my beloved - name Paul gives to the Philippians
 1. strong words and commands need to come with affirmation of love and "I am for you"
 2. All Christian obedience is predicated on the love of the obeyer to the obeyed
 - a. The greatest commandment
 - i. Love God with everything that you are and have
 - ii. Love neighbor as you do yourself
 - b. Obedience is not mere duty, but is the Christian's delight
 - i. Fear-based obedience is actually self-centered
 - ii. Love-based obedience is God-centered
- b. Obedience is continual
 - i. you always obeyed
 1. (in the past)
 2. responded to Paul's instruction in Christ
 3. humility – obedience of Christ in His self-abasement
 - ii. not only upon my arrival
 1. when Paul was there
 2. It's easier to follow when your leader is present then when he is not
 - iii. also now much more in my absence
 1. "much more" – modifier of obey
 2. Indicative of a stronger implore to obey when he is not there to oversee
 - a. Much of the division that exists may be due to a lack of leadership
 - b. Remember the Philippians' situation (many different backgrounds)

2. The Gospel Calls Us to Severe Work

- a. With fear and trembling
 - i. in the light of Jesus' super-exaltation and His majestic Kingship
 - ii. obedience from love comes with a severity
 1. remember the context: lack of humility, factious, etc.

God isn't interested in serenity: Jesus was passionate for God, angry at sin, weeping for the city. The word *holy* means 'set apart' or 'consecrated.' For Jesus, holiness meant being set apart from, or different from, our sinful ways. It didn't mean being set apart *from* the world, but being consecrated *to* God in the world. He was God's glory *in* and *for* the world." - Tim Chester, *You Can Change*

- b. work out your (plural) own salvation
 - i. from compound word: to do (εργαζομαι) + according to (κατα)
 1. NOT "work for" or "work at" or "work toward"
 - a. Context is self-abasement/humility that produces exaltation
 - b. Nothing to boast in that is ours
 - c. This is not a work that comes from self-effort, 2nd half of verse

2. Word means to “produce, create, accomplish”
 - a. Tension? Oh, yeah!
 - b. How can this fit in with the obvious teaching that our salvation is a “gift of God”(Rom 6:23) and is “not as a result of works” (Eph 2:9), holding “that one is justified by faith apart from the works of the law” (Rom 3:28)
- ii. There is no salvation that does not result in a manifestation of righteousness
 1. Note the juxtaposition of Ephesians 2:9-10
 - a. “not of works” v9
 - b. “for good works” v10
 2. Note the tension of Romans 6:22-23
 - a. Outcome of slavery to God = sanctification
 - b. Sanctification leads to eternal life
 - c. Eternal life is a free gift
 3. This is the obvious tension between human obedience and God’s gracious action in our salvation
 - a. Differing views of Justification:
 - i. Obedience = Justification (common view of Christianity)
 - ii. Faith + Obedience = Justification (Roman Catholic view)
 - iii. Faith = Justification + Obedience (Evangelical Gospel)
 - b. The bottom line is that there is no salvation without transformation of the soul to righteousness (not perfection, but righteousness)
 - i. This is so much a truth of the gospel that Paul actually uses an extremely strong word “*produce* your own salvation”
 - ii. It is also so much a truth that God is the source of all of this “working out” that no clearer statement has been made in all of Scripture than in v13, “it is God who works in you even the will and the work according to His good pleasure”
- iii. There is an obvious tension between human activity and divine activity within the salvation message (particularly here in these two immediate verses)
 1. There is great emphasis on us producing our salvation
 - a. “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”
 2. Yet, in no greater manner is the divine work of God at the root of our will and power set forth than in verse 13
 - a. “for it is God who is working in you even to will and to work”
 - b. And this is not a cooperative work, but rather a dependent work which is sourced and empowered by God in the core of our person
 3. How can this be?
 - a. We must choose Christ in order to be saved:
 - i. Choose to trust in Him and in His atoning work
 - ii. Choose to follow Him as our Lord and Master
 - iii. These are willed and desired choices that we freely make
 1. “One cannot be my disciple if...” (Luke 14:26-27)
 - b. We always choose according to our desire
 - i. Not the “God who works *in you*”
 1. IN – down at the deepest root of your affections/desires, which determine the direction of your will/choice
 2. In fact, in Greek, the word for desire and will is the same, for the will is merely the power to pursue in effort to achieve one’s desires
 - ii. The question is then: are our desires for God or for something else?
 1. The Scripture is clear that we desired idols rather than God because of our slavery to sin
 2. The slavery is not merely at the level of the will, but rather at the level of the affections

3. Our desires were all screwed up and we could not free ourselves from our own idolatrous hearts
- iii. This turns us to the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (John 3)
 1. His "born again" work precedes our active and willing choice of Jesus
 2. He recreates our will, working to produce in us, solely by God's gracious and sovereign work, a new set of desires for Him
 3. Out of these new desires, fashioned by the Holy Spirit, we freely choose the most beautiful thing to our soul: Jesus, the Savior of our souls through repentance and faith
- iv. This is God working to will and to work for His own good pleasure
 1. Our working is never without His previous working in the deep recesses of our desires, our affections
 2. Yet, we must work, for there is no salvation without our works
 - a. We must be careful here, but look at this way:
 - b. We work, not in a legalistic sense of trying to earn God's favor, but rather out of a faith that is grateful and obeys willingly and joyfully
 - i. A life void of willful, joyful, faith-filled, righteous works (in this context humble service) reveals that one does not truly desire Christ nor trust Him
 - ii. There is no such thing as a Christian without good works

"God's working in us is not suspended because we work, nor our working suspended because God works. Neither is the relation strictly one of cooperation as if God did his part and we did ours so that the conjunction or coordination of both produced the required result. God works and we also work. But the relation is that *because* God works we work. All working out of salvation on our part is the effect of God's working in us....We have here not only the explanation of all acceptable activity on our part but we also have the incentive to our willing and working....The more persistently active we are in working, the more persuaded we may be that all the energizing grace and power is of God." - John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (italics mine)

3. The Gospel Calls Us to Humble and Wholehearted Work BECAUSE God is the Source of Our Transformation
 - a. For (because) God is the one working in you
 - i. This eliminates the top two views of Justification for the work is God's work
 1. Faith is not viewed as a work, but rather as repentant dependence
 2. Giving up and Leaning Upon
 - ii. The command to work out is based upon the fact that God is working
 - a. Humility for it is not our power, but His
 - i. The will to holiness belongs to God's sphere of work
 - ii. The work, or power/strength, to produce our severe working also belongs to God's sphere of work
 - iii. So, at the root and in the end both are ascribed to God, so what can we glory or boast in?
 - b. Confidence in our transformation to holiness because God is working...I mean, **GOD IS WORKING IN YOU!**
 - iii. The gift and presence of His Holy Spirit in you means that our "working out" will produce great results that bring Him good pleasure

- a. Hope of change!!
 - b. Spirit produced godliness
- b. for the sake of His good pleasure (*ευδοκία*)
 - i. a common biblical expression of His divine grace!
 - a. God works to His ends for His pleasure and glory
 - b. All of what God does, from creation to judgment to redemption, is for His renown and His good pleasure
 - c. His desire is that we would glorify Him with wholehearted joy through a deep, loving, trusting obedience to His Word
 - ii. This is a promise!!
 - a. Gal 5:17 – the flesh battles against the Spirit so that we might not do “what we want”
 - i. What we want is to obey the Spirit and glorify God!
 - ii. This is our deepest desire, which admittedly sometimes gets overshadowed by the lesser desires of the flesh, but His promise is that His Spirit goes to war for us
 - b. This is how we can hope for change!!
- c. Knowing that we are righteous in the eyes of God because of Christ’s redeeming work frees us to obey Him fully, for His sake and pleasure rather than trying to earn His acceptance
 - i. This creates in us a great ability to risk losing face before others because we will not before God
 - ii. This leads us to *want* to please God because He’s been so gracious to us in Christ

Conclusion:

“You were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” (Galatians 5:13) So, as we celebrate the independence and cultural freedoms that we have been graced with in this country, let us also set our personal rights aside to walk in the righteousness of Christ. This means, in the light of the gospel of Jesus who emptied Himself and now is super-exalted as the Lord, we are to pour out our own lives for the sake of others with the humility that exemplifies and proves that we truly do belong to Jesus. How can you serve your neighbor today? What cross is the Lord asking you to carry tonight? Pick it up, even if gingerly and slowly, pick it up remember this deep truth: God is working in you even the will and the power for His own good pleasure. Go forth and die joyfully with fear and trembling for God is near and He is powerful to effect change in you and to make you effective for change in others. And always remember to humbly thank the One humbled Himself so greatly and is now super-exalted above every other name.