

# Active Christianity

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 03 August 2008

[0:00] Luke 2, looking at active Christianity. That's what I want us to be urged to today.

Luke 2, verse 12, it tells us, It tells us, Friends, it's got a serious aspect to it. Christianity, what is it? What is it all about? There's a light and fluffy, warm and fuzzy kind of Christianity today. There's a fuzzy kind of God today. A carefree kind of Christianity. Fear and trembling, what's that all about? We don't need that in our church. That's what you hear.

It's all light and breezy. Take it or leave it. Couldn't care less kind of Christianity. But the Bible kind of Christianity is a Christianity that has fear and trembling.

[1:30] It's serious stuff, serious brothers and sisters. There's no levity and lightness here. This is serious.

This is heaven and hell stuff. Now sometimes when we're talking to the young people there's a bit of an inattention. You just want to grab a hold of them and shake them up sometimes.

But you know, you feel like that with some adults too. So watch out this morning. Now what a serious kind of Christianity. We are to work out our salvation.

Now it says work out, not work for. Christianity isn't something that you receive from your works but it works out in you. It works out in you. You don't work for it.

You work it out. With fear and trembling. Fear and trembling. Now fear and trembling, we could think of really picturing ourselves in His presence.

[2:29] Now the context here is how one day every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord. It calls for a humble spirit doesn't it? To think of His great majesty, our great Lord and Master and Saviour before one day whom we will bow.

It calls for humility of spirit. And it also calls for an alertness too. In 1 Peter 5 we are told in verse 8 that our adversary the devil is like a roaring lion walking about seeking whom he may devour.

He wants to have you for his dinner. He wants to grind you up into little pieces and squash you down into the ground and destroy you.

He seeks those whom he wants to devour. And friends we should be fear and trembling, not of Him but of wanting to be right with our God. Friends if the devil is a roaring lion, you know God is awesome isn't he?

We don't want to be caught out. It says that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro over the whole earth and He sees our every thing, our every thought, our every doing. The fear of God should cause people to depart from evil.

[3:43] Proverbs 16 verse 6. The fear of God is a good thing because it makes us take stock doesn't it? It makes us take a look at how we are and want to be right with Him.

The fear of God will cause people to depart from evil. And having fear and trembling, the opposite of fear and trembling is having pride and being self-satisfied isn't it?

If we were full of pride we wouldn't have that fear of Him. We don't have a self kind of pride. We don't have that kind of self-satisfaction that we've got it all together.

We want to have that sense of awe, of wonder, of reverence, of wanting to depend upon Him and upon His grace. And to have that kind of zeal, that holy zeal for God.

A preacher John MacArthur said that this kind of fear is a fear of sinning. We want to be afraid to sin.

[4:40] We want to distrust our own strength in the face of temptation. We want to have a horror at the thought of dishonouring God. That sense of foreboding that comes with the understanding of the deceitfulness of sin.

Sin is deceitful. And as we know the Word tells us that every heart, every man's heart is deceitful and unreliable. And who can know it? And MacArthur goes on quoting the Bible, To this one I'll look, to him who is humble, and of a contrite spirit who trembles at my word.

And Isaiah 66 verse 5 it says, Hear the word of the Lord, he who trembled at His word. Hear the word, tremble at it, take it seriously, take it personally, take it in the full weight of it.

Of what it is, it is the word of the Lord. And MacArthur goes on, When the Lord speaks in this context of a trembler at His word, He is in effect using that expression as a title for the true believer. Every believer should live in such awe of God's majesty and holiness that he shone sin lest it grieve his Lord.

[5:54] Violate His testimony to an unbelieving world, or negate His usefulness in ministry. Friends, we need to think of our standing and our state. We need to be those that will have that fear and trembling.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Take it seriously this morning. Take it seriously. This isn't just some kind of social club, just some kind of a gathering of nice kind of people.

They want to come and sing a few songs and have some tea and vickies and a cuppa. This is the work of God. This is the church of God. This is the people of God. This is the word of God.

This is heaven and hell. This is preparing for your future eternal home and getting right with Him. And working out your salvation. It's real. It's true. It's needful.

It takes hard and consistent effort. Working it out. Working it out. Putting the work into it. Putting an effort into it. It talks about putting an effort into it. There's a lot of Christians that just coast along.

[6:52] They just coast along as if they just got it in autopilot or something. Or they just got it the cruise control on, you know. They're just, oh, I'm a Christian.

I've got my name in the book so I'll just take the free and easy ride to glory. But no, there's a work to be done. There's an activity. There's an energy. There's an effort that's called for.

A pursuit of holiness. A cultivating over obedience to the word of God. Paul called for beating our bodies into submission.

Of cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Perfecting holiness in the fear of God. It's a high calling. It's important.

This is important stuff. There's nothing more important that we can be about. There's high calling that we are to be about. Almighty God. This is the one we're talking about.

[7:48] He is almighty. Shouldn't we fear and tremble before him? Not that we're going to be subject to his wrath. Because his judgment, his wrath has been vented already in Christ, hasn't it?

But yet we should, as his children, we should want to fear the chastening. The chastening, the discipline of our Lord. And be in wonder and amazement at him. And have that healthy attitude of God's greatness and his glory.

And that accountability that we have to him. We don't want to grieve him, do we? Because we love him. Isn't it? I know my dad's moving to the area so we might see more of him.

But, you know, I was afraid of my dad in a healthy way. Because I knew if I was going to do something wrong, I was going to wear it. I was going to face it. And yet, I didn't want to displease him.

I wanted to please him. I wanted to please my parents. And I'm sure, you know, looking back, we loved our parents. We wanted to do what was right. Not do that which would displease them.

[8:56] And it's like that too with the fear of God, isn't it? That we love him. We love him and we want to please him. We want to not violate his goodness and his nature and to grieve him.

A preacher put it like this, not all fears are bad. Many of them are wholesome. Indeed, very necessary for life. The fear of God, the fear of fire.

Now we teach our tour on the fear of fire, don't we? Don't muck around with heaters. The fear of electricity. They're life saving fears.

That is needed, bring a new knowledge to life. And it's a fearful thing, brothers and sisters, to fall into the hands of the living God. Wake up! Christian this morning, wake up!

And get serious about your Christianity. Step over the line. Stop being a casual Christian. Start being one who's really active, who really takes it seriously.

[9:54] Develop that healthy respect for the Lord, for his authority, for his discipline. Work out your own salvation. Work it out. Not work for it. Work it out.

Put it into action. And we see that in a couple of things, that this working out is to occur. And he says, it says, or we'll repeat it again, 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.

God wants us to will and to do of his good pleasure. Firstly, will. Is God at work within your life? Within you? Within your will? Within your desire?

Within your will? God worketh in you to will. It's got the sense of a desiring. It's a desiring that we have, of wanting to serve him. When you become a Christian, you want to live for him.

You want to please him. You want to do that which would please his heart. And his divine energy is at work in your heart, prompting you, urging you, drawing you.

[10:58] So you want to do his good pleasure. He creates godly desires in you. As a Christian, he gives you that desire. He gives you that. He births it within your spirit, within your inner man, within your will, within your mind, within your spirit.

And as he births that, as he works it out, we become more willing to do his will and follow his desires instead of what we may desire that's contrary to that.

The text here, it's got the sense of God is continuing. It's a continual sense here. It's a continuing thing that is God's working. It's a continual energizing, a continual creating in us the desire and the power to live for his good pleasure.

So firstly we see, you could put it in technical terms, the volition, the will, and then the action, the work. The volition, so the volition, the will, the mind, the desire, the wanting to, the volition, and then secondly the action, the doing, the working.

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.

[12:16] So you've got the will, you've got the desire, you've got the wanting to. As a believer it should be a supernatural inclination, well your supernatural inclination I suppose, that God makes you want to love him, he makes you want to please him, he makes you want to desire his best for your life and to do it.

And then he worketh in you to do, to do. Put your running shoes on this morning. Get out there on the race track and run the race with patience.

And I think some Christians are still sleeping when they should be putting their running shoes on. They're still thinking about it and not doing it.

Put those running shoes on so to speak. Those are, the writer Ryan Wiersbe, the writer Ryan Wiersbe, the writer of a frustrated Sunday school teacher. The class wasn't running, this teacher was getting frustrated, the parents weren't going as well as she'd have liked them to.

And she wore herself out, working harder and harder, yet nothing changed. Finally after recognising that her ministry was self-motivated and self-activated, things began to change.

[13:33] She says, I've learnt to draw constantly on the Lord's power and things are different. This woman still works hard as a teacher but no longer self-experimentally.

Instead she's learnt to work out, moment by moment, what God works in. It's a working out of your salvation, what God works in you.

He works in you both to will and to do. And He energises His children. God energises us. This is the sense of this word working. There's a sense where it says in verse 13, God which worketh in you.

The word worketh is in the Greek, energeo. Now it doesn't take Einstein to work out what that word relates to in the English language. You know what it is?

Energy. Oh Stuart knows. Energy. Energeo. God's here to be an energetic Christian. God's here to be an energetic Christian. God's got an energeo working you with His energy, with His divine energy, with His divine energising.

[14:42] For us to be His children who obey Him and serve Him, it's His power that enables our sanctification, our holiness, our being made more like Christ.

And it's His good pleasure. Here's how someone described the good pleasure of God. When we experience God's love through faith in Christ, something wonderful is born in us, a desire to love and to please Him, for all that He has done for us.

This desire may grow faint at times, especially when other passions claim a fulfilment, but the Lord is always working in us, both to will and to do, of His good pleasure.

When we realise that He always desires our good, we will want to live for His glory. It's God's enabling power. God's enabling power.

There's a translator called Wurst who puts it like this, God is the one who is constantly putting forth His energy in you.

[15:45] God is the one who is constantly putting forth His energy in you. Isn't that great to know that, you know, I know Julie hears this all the time, that when her husband groans and grumbles, he's a whinge bag sometimes, and he says, Oh, I just don't have the energy.

You know, Andrew Craig says it all the time, I just don't have the energy. You know, but thank God, His energy, amen? We've got God, He's got the energy-o, God which worketh in you.

God's going to give you the energy. You know, if you ever feel like saying that, you ever feel flat, you ever feel like, Oh, do I have to? The energy-o comes from Him, amen?

He can give you the energy. And the sense of this verse here, is He continually energizes. He continually energizes. So, I guess when I say I don't have the energy, maybe I just need to tap in. You know, get plugged in, amen? Get plugged into the energy-o, amen? Ask God to give me some more energy. You know, you could say that God is the energy, and He is the energizer.

[16:59] And He's not like these little energizer bunny things, that run out of energy. God's energy goes on forever, amen? His energy is forever. And His kind of energy is the one that continually energizes us.

He is the energy, and He is the energizer. Someone put it like this. They talked about how you could use different analogies, like the toaster. The toaster cannot produce toast, unless it is connected.

So that it's Necron wire is heated by the electricity, from the electric powerhouse. The electric iron is useless, unless you plug the iron into the wall socket.

There will be no light in the room at night, unless electricity flows through the tungsten wire within the light bulb, each end of this wire being in contact with wires coming from the source of electric energy.

Maybe you don't have any energy, because you're not connected. I know I need to reconnect, don't you? I need to reconnect and keep reconnecting to Him. It's wonderful to think that God works out His salvation within us.

[18:13] God worketh in you as you work out your salvation. There's a story told, an illustration of this, how there was a famous pianist out in this great big auditorium and thousands were there to hear this Polish composer, pianist.

He was a pianist. He was scheduled there in this great big concert hall for high society. Everybody that was anybody was there. In the audience there was a mum there with a 39 year old son. Wearing of waiting, the little boy slipped down away from her side and slipped down. He was drawn to the Steinway, the piano on the stage. And without much notice from the audience, he sat down at the stool and he began to play chopsticks.

And the roar of the crowd, they thought it was funny at first, but then it turned to shouts as hundreds yelled, Oh, get the boy away! Get him away from the piano! They didn't want to hear it.

They didn't want him to muck around. You know, it was funny for a time, but just get him off the piano, get rid of him. And then when Paderewski, the famous pianist, heard the uproar backstage, he grabbed his coat and rushed over behind the boy and reaching around him from behind, the master began to improvise a melody, a counter melody to chopsticks to the flunk tune.

[19:35] And as the two of them played together, Paderewski kept whispering in the boy's ear, Keep going! Don't quit! Don't quit son!

Don't stop! Don't stop!

And it's a picture really of God working in us, isn't it? As we work out our own salvation, God works in us. You know, in our fumbling efforts that, you know, I'm guilty of all the time, fumbling and messing up, that God works in us despite us, despite our inadequacies, despite our foolishnesses, despite our failings, despite our feeling like we can't serve, we can't deliver.

Step out! Like the little boy did, and have a go! Have a go to serve him! Have a go to do something! To serve the Lord, to live for him!

Step out of the comfort zone! That's what it takes, isn't it? Sometimes we get in the comfort zone, and we get too comfortable, don't we? We get too cosy and smug, and in a rut, and it's just easy not to step out and make an effort.

But it says work out, it's got the sense of effort. Put an effort into it, work out your own salvation. And as we do, God comes alongside, just like the pianist did to the young boy, and says, don't stop, keep on going.

[20:54] Keep on going, don't listen to them, just keep on doing what I've given you to do. And the Spirit of God uses the Word of God. It says in 1 Thessalonians 2 verse 13, of the Word of God, 1 Thessalonians 2 verse 13, it says that the Word of God effectually worketh, it's the same word, *energeo*, in us that believe.

God's Word gives us an energy. In you that believe, this is the energy source, this is the power source of God's energy, God's power, God's energizing. The Word of God will energize you, it will work in you.

And the Spirit of God uses the Word of God, and the power of God is released to us through the Word of God. Some Christians are weak and worldly because they're not reading their Bibles on a daily basis.

Take the Word, get re-energized, get energized by it. And another way that God works in us too, secondly, is in prayer. I know our brother that led the prayer time said how prayer is the powerhouse of the church.

And really you could see that in how God works in us through the Word of God. God works in us through prayer. And yet many Christians neglect to pray.

[22:14] They neglect to pray. They neglect to, and we're not talking about the corporate prayer, but in personal prayer, in that life of prayer, in that life of communion, in that secret place.

Don't forget to pray. Pray. God works in us through prayer. It says, James 5.16, confess your faults to one another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed, the effectual fervent prayer, of a righteous man of all must.

Now this word effectual fervent, is that *energeo* again. There it is again, that energy. God gives us the energy, as we have that effectual fervent prayer.

Effectual fervent, those two words, is that *energeo*. Prayer will give you energy. God will give you energy as you tap in, to his power source if you like.

And Christ must first work in us, before he can work through us. We see that in the life of Moses. He had a great long time of wandering, didn't he? Forty years in the back of the desert, but God was working in Moses.

[23:20] And sometimes we need to just keep pressing through, keep pressing on. God worketh in you. Work out your salvation. Keep going. Devote your energy, to the things that count.

It's what he entitled to, to be zealous of good works. God tells us, that we should be zealous of good works. We need to be on fire. We need to be bubbling and boiling over, and burning hot for God.

That's what he wants you to be, for me to be. To be zealous of good works. Some Christians, they're like a pan on the stove, that's just kind of simmering.

Maybe not even that. Just lukewarm. And turn up the heat. Ask God to turn up the heat. Ask God to make you bubbling and boiling over.

I think that's the sense of the word here. To be zealous. To be boiling over. To be exuberant. Excited about your Christianity.

[24:26] That it's something that matters for you. That's something that's personal and that you care about. And God is active and operative in your life. That's the whole sense of this verse, of the energizing. And the energizing is from the Lord.

It's from the Lord. I don't have any energy. But thank God, he's got so much hasn't he? He's got so much energy. He is the energy source of the universe, isn't he?

In him all things hold together. By him all things consist. He is the source of every energy. And friends, he wants you to live the Christ-driven life.

For you to be a dynamo for God. For you to be a whirlwind, a dynamic for God. To be used by him. To be energized by him.

Strengthened by him. Empowered by him. And of course, you know, the Holy Spirit, he empowers us. He fills us. He empowers us. He emboldens us. He uses us. And he wants to fill you.

[25:28] He wants to fill you. It talks about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The baptism in the Holy Spirit. It means an immersion. An immersion.

When you go and get baptized, and you get immersed in that water. That's what God, the Holy Spirit, wants to do with you. He wants to baptize you. To immerse you in himself.

Isn't that wonderful? I was thinking how you could, you know, without being irreverent or anything, but I could have maybe an aquarium tank on here. You picture an aquarium tank, and you picture like a little ragdoll.

A little ragdoll, and you dunk it down in the aquarium. A little ragdoll, and that ragdoll just gets saturated. That's the picture, isn't it?

Of what God wants to do with you and me. To be as if a little ragdoll pushed in a tank of water. That not only does the little ragdoll get baptized, like immersed, and he's down in the water, but he gets filled at the same time.

[26:27] That's what God wants to do with you. He wants to baptize you, immerse you, and he wants to fill you with himself. So that you are in Christ, and Christ is in you.

And he is the powerhouse. He is the energy source. He is the one, the energizer. And he wants us to live the Christ-driven life. Friends, we've got an energy crisis today.

There's an energy crisis. They're all talking about it. I don't know how real the carbon talk is, but there's an energy crisis. There's certainly an energy crisis in the church of the living God.

There's an energy crisis. A lot of Christians are saying, I don't have any energy. But, thank God, He's got all the energy that we need.

And He wants to work in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure. And the good pleasure, it means that we want to bring Him delight. We want to will and to do of His good pleasure.

[27:25] To delight the heart of God. To delight Him. To please Him. To give Him pleasure and satisfaction. Friends, just to close with a passage in Ephesians 3. Paul prayed for the believers.

He says, for this cause. From verse 14. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory to be, strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye have been rooted and grounded in love.

And that word worketh is energio as well.

Faith worketh by love. Our faith works because we love Him. Amen? If your faith isn't loving, maybe check out your love relationship with God today. If your faith isn't alive and active, do you love Him? Faith worketh by love. Faith is energised by your love for Christ. That ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth, the length, the height, the home, the whole expanse of it, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

[28:52] Just get baptised this morning. Amen? Get filled with all the fullness of Him. Filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that ye ask or think, according to the power that worketh.

in you, his power at work energising in you. Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.

Amen? The power that worketh in you, that energises you. And friends, let's not be like, as I say, the little energiser bunnies you see on the adverts. Ultimately they're going to run out.

But let's not be like the little energiser bunnies you see on the adverts. But let's be plugged in, connected, connected, to the ever living, ever giving, unlimited supply of His energy.

That He will energise you, that He will create in you that desire to will and to do of His good pleasure. To please Him, to have the life of prayer, effectual, fervent, energised prayer.

[30:02] To have the word that worketh in you, that energises you. As you read it, take it. This is God talking to you. You don't need some latter-day prophet to lay hands on you and tell you a word from God.

This is the total, 100% reliable word of God. You can't get any better than this right here. In your hands, brothers and sisters, take it and get energised by it. Let's go inside.

Thank you.