

A Good Work

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[0 : 00] Is God at work in you? The Bible says he is. You are his workmanship we're told and he is doing a good work in you. And he wants you to work out your salvation. We see that in this verse here, Philippians 2 verse 12. Paul writes to the Philippians he says, wherefore my beloved as you've always obeyed not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Now I know as Bible believing people we don't believe that salvation is by works. We want to make that very clear. But sometimes we downplay works such that we don't work. That's a mistake too. Because our faith should work. How's your faith? Is it working?

I pray that this message will stir you to activate your faith. Activate your faith. Work out your own salvation. So we're saved by faith, God's grace and then our salvation is worked out. It's lived out. It's talking here about fear and trembling. Are you right with God is the big question isn't it? This matters most of all. First and foremost, are you saved?

I know when we're witnessing to folks sometimes they say, I hope I'm saved or I think I'm saved. But the Bible says you can know that you're saved. And that's only by the promises of God. If we trust him as he tells us to, then you can say, yes, I am saved. Definitely. I know that I'm saved. Are you saved? Is your heart right with God? That matters the most. And really that's by simple faith, by trusting Christ. It's not by working of your own. It's not by good works, lest anyone should boast as we will touch on later.

[1 : 56] Is your heart right with God? It comes by faith. Simply trusting. Really, we are saved by work, the finished work of Christ, that Christ finished at the cross. That work saves for a time and for eternity for all that will trust his work, the finished work. Because when he said it is finished, everything that had to be done to save us was done there.

And so for us today, as saved people, the question then is, how's our faith? Is it working? Are we working it out? Is it functioning, activated, or is it hit and miss? Have we settled those things that he's challenged us about?

Notice we are to work out our own salvation, it says, with fear and trembling. There's a serious aspect here. This is fearful. This is trembling. This is awesome. Do we stand in awe of our God? Do we let him search our hearts and deal with our sin? Are we taking our faith seriously? Or is it just a casual interest? Is it just a passing, tokenistic lip service?

You know, for some people, church is almost just like a social club, just an activity that they fit in when they can, out of routine, out of habit, out of duty, out of maybe just the social element, but they're not saved. That can happen.

But as saved people who trusted Christ, there's a work that he is doing. As we gather, as we witness, as we minister in all ways, our faith can be worked out.

[3 : 32] Is it for real, this faith that we're talking about, with fear and trembling? Do we fear God? Do we care what matters in his sight, in the sight of this holy God with whom we have to deal?

Is there a fear and trembling as you consider the holy truths of God? This book, as it reads in Isaiah 66, is such that we should tremble at the contents of this book.

As Isaiah records how the Lord says, To this man will I look, to this man, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my words.

In other words, consider the holy truths, and you're standing before this holy one. Not be flippant or careless about holy truths, but come before him in humility, with the fear of God.

That's a good way to work out your own salvation. Notice also that God works in you. We read Philippians 2.13. For, as it reads further, as it goes on to say, As we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, For, verse 13, For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

[4 : 47] We may not always be sensitive to it, but God is at work. And it's also true that God is at work in everyone who believes.

So, we should be patient with one another, that God is working in you. God is working in you. God is working in me. God is working in all of us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. As we've yielded him our heart, we're all at different places on that walk with him. God is working on you. God is working in you. Will you let him?

It's a big question, isn't it? Because God wants to work in you. Sometimes we get in the way. Sometimes I know for me, the biggest obstacle for God working in my life is me.

Isn't that true? Believe God that he will do the work. And sometimes we doubt God. We doubt, is God working in me? Is it real? Have I got enough faith?

[5 : 41] Maybe I'm not able. Well, Genesis 18, 14, it tells of the account of Sarah and Abraham of the miraculous provision of childbirth to this ages-old couple.

And the statement from the word of God is, is anything too hard for the Lord? We might think of ourselves not able, but is God able?

Is anything too hard for him? That he can work even with such as we, such as me. God is working in you. So be that channel. You know, there's a song that goes, be a channel for the river of God. You want to be a channel where he's working in you. To be a channel, not a resistor of God, but let God work through you, flow through you. Don't get in the way of God's working.

Be willing to yield yourself to him. And stop making excuses why you can't. Is anything too hard for the Lord? He can use us despite us.

[6 : 47] And stop making excuses. Some would say that they can't. They can't know God's work within. Here's a quote.

Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do. We might think of all the excuses why we can't do something. Like Moses was saying, I'm not able.

You know, he talked about his speech impediment. He got Aaron to undertake some things on his part. And other prophets likewise have said, you know, I'm just a child or I've got this or that.

I'm not able. Do what you can do. God will make a way. Be willing. Simply be willing. And have the heart to be willing. Notice it says, as we read, to will and to do.

It's twofold. There's the desire and there's the action. To will, a conscious decision of the will, the willpower. But don't leave it there that you're just thinking about it.

[7 : 47] Do it. To will and to do. So there's that twofold thought about God's work in us is having the willpower, the willingness, and then the activation.

To live that life. Live it out. Live doubt faith. It's a Christ-like attitude. And that goes right through the mountaintops and the valleys of life.

Because we know as God does that work and it's a continual work, we'll have some mountaintops where it's easy to live for God.

But there'll be valleys too when it'll be hard. When there'll be tough things to get through. But our faith will carry us through the highs and lows of life. And we'll put feet under our faith.

We'll walk it out. As I touched on this morning, our Lord says, do not let your hearts be troubled. We refuse to be troubled. Even the troubles of life because our faith will persevere.

[8 : 49] It'll press through. We'll walk by faith, not by sight. We won't be overwhelmed by the circumstances of life. We'll believe our faith. We'll live it out. Now, here's what I read a quote that tells of how we, each one of us, are part of God's working.

And it's really that we all are the church. Every one of us. The church is every one of us as believers. And I'll read this quote which talks about that aspect.

Speaking to every believer. We don't always realise it or are conscious of it. We are part of the church. As a Christian, we're part of the Christian church. Worldwide, really. As well as this local church that you identify with.

And here's this quote. It says, You are a walking advertisement of your church and the Christ whom it proclaims. You take the church out of its four walls and you make it live in the everyday affairs of life.

In fact, when people think of your church, they think of you. The preaching in the pulpit is fruitless unless it's reflected in the lives of the members of the congregation. Including the preacher's life.

[9 : 54] All the teaching is ineffectual unless it comes to life in the attitudes and behaviour of people. Your church is measured not so much by what its leaders say as by what you do.

You are your church's best product and the validation of its claims. You are the means by which the good life advocated by the church is communicated to people. Your church professes a concern for people.

You express that concern in the way you act towards others. Your church claims to have a gospel that will make people new. Opening to them eternal life. You are the demonstration of that claim. So your daily act as a Christian, preach more sermons, teach more people, save more lives than the words that are spoken inside the four walls of your church building.

End quote. It's a thought, isn't it? That we're all working out. God's working out his salvation. He's working in you. He's doing a good work through you. And as you go about, day by day, it's the 24-7, isn't it?

[10 : 55] There are six other days of the week that you're living the life, you're willing and you're doing of his good pleasure. So what is it that we are to will and to do of our own good pleasure?

No, of his good pleasure. His good pleasure. To work and to will and to do his will. Have we that heart to please God? Do we count it important that we will please God to will and to do his good pleasure?

In other words, the will of God. Is that what shapes and defines what our daily choices will be? Of course, we know our salvation, our saving is not of works.

But that doesn't mean we stop working. It's all the more reason we want to have an activated faith. God's designed is that our faith works.

That it actually works in practical, lived out ways. Are we an authentic Christian? A Christianity that's authentic. It's real. It's fair dinkum.

[11 : 58] And it's lived out. When we walk and talk with other people, really, when you think about it, how do we treat others? Because God's put certain people in our lives, not all of whom we might necessarily like.

And we think of how our Lord treated the people that were around him. Think of the lepers of society in Christ's day. They were outcasts, unclean.

Yet the Lord Jesus touched them. He embraced them. He loved them. He healed them. And God's put people in our lives, hasn't he? And we're to will and to do of his good pleasure where we can make that influence on people around about.

Where the rubber hits the road, where we actually got people that we have to deal with, people that we know, people we have a circle of influence to reach out to.

So work out your salvation. And that happens in the day-by-day interactions of life. Another thought about this God working in us is that we are his workmanship.

[12 : 58] We see that the Bible is clear about salvation as we started talking about that familiar passage, Ephesians 2, verse 8. For by grace are ye saved through faith, that not of yourselves.

It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. And it reads on this, it says, So of course our salvation is entirely not of works.

Yet in saving us, he's made us his workmanship. Really, you could put it that we are like his masterpiece. Every one of you is so perfectly individually made as he has made you, as he has wanted you to be made.

You are his masterpiece, his project, his work in progress. And he has created you, every one of you, every one of us. He's created us, it says, unto good works, that we should walk in them.

He's ordained that we should have these good works. It's his design. He's planned it that way. He's purposed it. It's why you exist, is to be his workmanship.

[14 : 08] It's why you exist, that you've been ordained, created. God's purpose for your life is that you have good works. So our heart attitude should flow through in our actions.

And really it is contrary to the Pharisees of the day. They, as our Lord called them, were hypocrites. Now the word hypocrite, literally it's used of an actor on a stage.

You might have seen those pantomime kind of masks that people wear, maybe on a stick or applied through wrapping around their head.

That they have put on this face. It's a putting on of a face. It's a wearing of a mask. Portraying a character. And this is what the word hypocrite means. It means that they're putting on a mask.

They're like actors on a stage. They're not the real deal. They're pretend. They're trying to convince the audience that there's some other character. And they're seeking the applause of others.

[15:07] That's what the Pharisees did. They're putting on a show, making it out that there was something they were not. And of course, God doesn't want us to be fake. He wants us to be real. He wants our faith to be real.

Sometimes there's folk that might be all blah, blah about their Christianity. But it's hollow, shallow, superficial, not real. We want our faith to be real, not fake.

And the Bible speaks about the purpose that we've been made. In Revelation 4 verse 11, the folk there were recounting the glory and honour and power that is due to our Lord.

And they say, For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

When you think about it, everything that's been made, everyone that has been made, has been made for the pleasure of God.

It's for his pleasure that they are and were created. You are God's workmanship. Every one of us has been individually crafted and made as he has willed.

[16:07] And he has specific good works for you. He's made you for that purpose. And it reads on in 2 Timothy 2, alike to that, how we are as a vessel fitted for the master's use.

Paul tells Timothy that there's vessels, different vessels. And verse 21 of 2 Timothy 2, it tells how a man can be a vessel unto honour.

He's made, sanctified, and made fit for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. So there's a sense where the vessel is honourable.

It's sanctified. It's made holy. When we're saved, God makes us his holy people. He cleanses us.

He makes us fit, meet, ready for the master's use, prepared unto every good work.

So every one of us is like a vessel, like a container that God fills with himself. And he's prepared us for good work. Now, I know I can feel inadequate.

[17:14] We might all feel that we are not able. But that doesn't stop God. Is anything too hard for God? No. God can use every vessel for his use, the master's use.

Hudson Taylor was asked why he was used of the Lord so greatly in China. And he said this, God had looked for a man weak enough, and he found me.

Just got to be weak enough for God to use. Just got to stop making excuses. Stop saying why you feel like you're not able. And just be weak enough for God to use.

And he went on to say, you become stronger only when you become weaker. When you surrender your will to God, you discover the resources to do what God requires.

Just surrender yourself. You are the vessel God has made, and God has given you all the resources to do his will, for his use, for every good work that he's designed for you to do.

[18:13] We know the Bible talks about how God has chosen the foolish, the weak, the base, the despised. You know, this word foolish is moros. It means God has chosen those that the world might reconsider as the most stupid, the blockheads.

God has chosen the foolish, as it were. Now, in other words, there's nobody too dumb that God cannot use. There's nobody too lacking upstairs that God cannot use.

He's chosen the foolish. He's chosen the weak, those that were without strength. He's chosen the base, the most lowly, the lowliest of the low, the base. He's chosen the despised.

He's chosen the nobodies. Really, there's nobody outside of the scope of who God cannot choose. And God has given each one of us a work to do.

And you might think, well, I'm broken, I'm inadequate, I've got faults and many imperfections. And I love how one preacher put it, God uses broken things.

[19:18] Broken soil to produce a crop. Broken clouds to give rain. Broken grain to make bread. Broken bread to give strength. It's the broken alabaster box that gives forth the perfume.

And it's Peter weeping bitterly who returns to greater power than ever. God can use the broken, even more so that we are broken. Even better that we are broken, that he can make us whole.

Amen. Put your faith into action. Know that even though you feel inadequate, though you feel broken, though you feel so weak, God uses the weak. His strength is made perfect in the weakness.

So put your faith into action in simple ways because God is at work in you. Now we might think as we go about our day by day, how could God use me? Who am I?

What can I do? There's a story about a woman who was working in the childcare industry. She wrote this, My long hours working as a childcare provider tempted me to complain about my job, although I didn't know what work God wanted me to do.

[20 : 20] I was sure it must be something other than just babysitting. Then one day a father commented as he picked up his toddler, he said, You taught Casey to pray.

She says, Grace, at home now. And my wife and I are thinking of attending church. God's direction suddenly became clear. Now when others ask what I do for a living, I smile and I say, I just babysit for the Lord.

God can use you even in the simple everyday, whatever your job is, whatever you're doing for a day by day living. God can use you in those things that you might think, oh, I'm just doing this.

God can use you if you're just being willing and surrendered. Be a vessel. Surrendered, sanctified, meet, ready, fit for the master to use. Let God use you in those day by day life experiences.

Because God is at work in you. Even more when times are tested and faith gets challenged. Our weaknesses make us appreciate God's strength. And it's where the rubber hits the road when tough things happen.

[21 : 26] When we face the trials of life. To illustrate that, we see how, for example, an aircraft landing gear is designed to take the weight of a plane, weighing several tons, moving it over 300 kilometres an hour as it drops down on the runway.

Those still tyres suddenly hit the road. And instantly the tyre rotation goes from zero to 300 kilometres an hour. And at the same time, the whole weight of the aircraft and its cargo suddenly thrust down on that tyre and frame.

And it's in that moment when the rubber hits the road that all the planning and work and effort and thought either succeeds or fails. And you could compare that aircraft's landing gear to the Christian life.

We go through our life and we learn about God. We fellowship. We study. But it's when the moments of life come where the rubber hits the road. When tough things happen to us.

When we're hit with sickness or our loved ones. When the weight of life comes down upon us.

When the rubber hits the road. Our faith still holds steady and strong. Because it's dependent on him.

[22 : 35] He's going to keep us through those tough times of life. And friends, you are created unto good works. Now, I'll just touch on real quick some references.

Because again, sometimes we downplay good works. We don't talk about good works so much. Because we know our salvation is not based on good works. But that's not to neglect that we shouldn't be working good works.

Here's just a few references. You can see them here. Extracts from verses that talk about good works. Good work. We should abound to every good work. We should be fruitful in every good work.

God wants to establish you. To confirm you in every good word and work. It talks about how godliness is associated with good works. It says we should diligently follow every good work.

It says we should be rich in good works. Prepared unto every good work. Thruly furnished unto all good works. Paul tells Titus that we should be showing ourselves a pattern of good works.

[23 : 36] In other words, be a model of good works. Be an example of good works. Be zealous of good works. Be ready to every good work. Careful to maintain good works. And the writer to the Hebrews said we should provoke unto love and to good works.

So there's many applications, many references. It's quite emphasized that good works matter. It's a good thing to have good works. To have that application, that activation of our faith.

And think of it, every one of us are part of God's working to other people in our lives. Here's what someone said. I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day.

I'd rather one should walk with men than merely show the way. It's living it out. It's faith lived out.

Your faith lived out speaks more loudly than any sermon on the internet.

Or your faith lived out speaks more loudly to your neighbour than anything that a church might be doing inside four walls that they don't know about.

[24 : 39] It's your life lived out. So do a good work. And don't be afraid to take the humble place when there's good work to do. There was an orchestra conductor who was once asked, what's the hardest instrument to play?

He said, without a moment's hesitation, second fiddle. I can always get plenty of first violinists. But to find one who'll play second violin with as much enthusiasm or the second French horn or the second flute, now that's a problem.

Yet if no one plays second, we have no harmony. So be willing to take the humble place, the lesser place. And you know, when you do a good work, it'll help you. There was a psychiatrist called Menninger who was asked what someone should do who feels on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

His advice, lock your house, go across the railroad tracks, find someone in need and do something for him. And it's true, isn't it? We can feel about ourselves.

We don't have those down moments. We all have them when we might feel a bit down, downhearted. Find someone else who probably needs a lift themselves and go and bless them.

[25 : 50] And God will help you. As you do a good work, it'll do you good. It'll help you. Let the works that you do bring glory to God. Our Lord says, let your light so shine before men.

Let your light shine that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. That's the reason we work to bring glory to God, not to bring glory to ourselves, but to glorify our Father.

And we can be that example. We can be that witness. As we depend upon the Lord, just let your light shine. Just let it shine. This little light of mine, I could break out into song.

You might think of yourself as underqualified, as inadequate, but God uses the small things. Now, as someone has said, if you think you're too small to be effective, you've never been in bed with a mosquito flying around.

Now, small things can be annoying. Even just little insignificant things. We've got something scratching in our ceiling at night while we're trying to go to sleep at the moment. It's probably just some small little creature that's quite annoying.

[26 : 56] Now, I'm not saying being annoying, but I'm saying don't be afraid to be a small thing. That God uses a small person. God uses small people. Amen? A man once wrote that mountains are made of small sands.

That moments make years and trifles life. There's a bit of a silly story about two birds talking to each other, as they do. There's two birds talking to each other, and there's a conversation that was going on about how important all of us are.

And the sparrow asked the dove, tell me the weight of a snowflake. Oh, nothing more than nothing was the answer. In that case, I must tell you a marvellous story, the sparrow said.

I sat on the branch of this pine tree close to the trunk, and it began to snow. And since I didn't have anything better to do, I counted the snowflakes settling on the twigs and the needles of my branch. And their number was exactly 3,741,952. And when the 3,741,953rd snowflake dropped onto the branch, nothing more than nothing, as you say, the branch broke off.

[28 : 08] You know, just a little snowflake. If you get enough of them, you have weight, all right? So you might feel, it's nothing about me. I'm insignificant. I'm just small. I'm just like a little snowflake.

No weight in me. I'm nothing to speak of. But one person with God is what we all are, isn't it? And perhaps if one person did their good work, it could be revival.

It could be that one person, that little snowflake that God sends revival to the church. When that one that thinks there's nothing about their prayer or their faith, when they put their faith and prayer and believe and serve and activate their faith, God can do wonders.

He's waiting for that one that might think they're not important. They might think they're small. But what can I do? I can't make any difference. God wants each one of us to do his work in us.

And to come to a final point is that God is working on you and he will continue to work.

[29 : 20] God will complete his work in you. We know that God starts the work. He's begun it. We're saved by faith. God miraculously saves us. That's the beginning.

And he'll perform it. He'll see it through. He's the author and the finisher of our faith, isn't he? He's begun a good work. He's going to perform it. He's going to complete it.

He's going to finish it. Paul says, being confident of this very thing, he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. It's almost like you're crossing the finishing line, isn't it?

Not that you say praise to me, but praise to him. I'm at the finishing line. And we can think, for the meantime, we should have the thought, be patient with me. God isn't finished with me yet.

And we can think of that, maybe we should have that same thought of our brothers and sisters. Be patient with them. God isn't finished with them yet. We're all still a work in progress. We know there's much work still to be done.

[30 : 21] God's not finished yet, but he will finish what he started. One day we'll be in glory and we'll know he's done that good work. He's finished that work. He'll complete his work in you.

There was a children's program that the children would say a little prayer at the end of the program. And it went like this. I will do the best that I can with what I have where I am for Jesus' sake today. That's simple, isn't it? Do the best you can with what you have where you are for his sake today. So to wrap up what we've covered tonight, here's the work God is working in your life.

Work out your own salvation. You're saved by faith, God's grace. You're saved. Work out your own salvation. You are his workmanship. You're special.

You're a masterpiece of his design. He's made you such that you can have a place of his blessing to be activated in your faith.

[31 : 20] You are his workmanship. God works in you. He works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. He's created you unto good works. You've got a purpose. You've got a reason.

You've got an activation that you can do. Find out how God wants to activate you. And don't say, who am I?

I'm too small. None of us are too small. None of us are too insignificant. Don't say, oh, can God use me? Is anything too hard for the Lord? If he wants you to be saved, if you would trust him to be saved, if you've received his promise, his invitation to be saved, he's going to begin a good work in you.

As you believe, as you receive, he has begun a good work and he will perform it. Surely, he's willing. Peace over will.

Can come. And so, in closing a prayer, now the God of peace, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight.

[32 : 34] Through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Let me just pray further. Lord, we thank you tonight that by your mercy we can trust you.

We can, by simple faith, receive that salvation gift. And when that begins, you've begun a good work in us. And you'll see it through. You'll finish it. You'll complete it. When we see the day of Jesus Christ, when we'll see you face to face.

When we enter heaven's portals. When we enter that gate of glory, Lord. When we see you face to face. And you'll say, well done, good and faithful servant. Lord, we thank you that it comes by faith, that salvation gift.

Help us to work out our salvation. To will to do it. To activate our faith in new ways. To know your will to do it. Lord, to be that vessel unto honour.

Such as we, Lord, let us be that container that you fill. And overflow. And keep on filling. Lord, do that work in us. We pray. Pray it won't be dead works.

[33 : 42] As your word tells us. There's works that are vain. They're dead works. But this is a living faith. That's an activated faith. A faith that works. Lord, we thank you for the grace that you give us.

To continue that work in each one of us. And help us, Lord, to be patient with one another. As we know, you're still continuing that work. You haven't finished with any of us yet.

Until we leave this earthly life. Lord, we're all at work in progress. Lord, be glorified. Such that we'll let our light shine. People will see our good works.

There'll be praise unto your name. There'll be that church activated. That, not a church inside four walls so much. But a church that's activated. Living witnesses for you.

And all to your glory, we pray. Be glorified in your church. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.