

The Long Road of Salvation

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: 17 January 2021

Preacher: John Angus Macleod

- [0 : 0 0] As you see there, the passage we're going to focus on today will be Philippians 2, 12 to 13, under the title, The Long Road of Salvation.
- Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.
- For it is God who works in you, both to will and to do, for his good pleasure. And the points that we hope to go through tonight, with God's help, first of all, looking at this long road of salvation, the love of the pastor.
- Then the obedience of the Christian, the presence of God, the road, the long road of salvation, the pleasure of God.
- The love of the pastor, you see, we'll be looking at Paul, the way he addresses them as beloved. The obedience of the Christian, that these are people who have been obedient in the past and in the present.
- [1 : 0 9] And the presence of God who works within us, both to will and do. And that we should therefore work out our own salvation. And it's a long road of salvation.
- And why do we do it? For the pleasure of God. So let's turn now to this passage. First of all, the love of the pastor.
- Isn't it amazing? Therefore, he says, my beloved. Don't pass these things by quickly when you're reading your Bible.
- Here's somebody saying that he loves a people. And he's saying that they are always his beloved. They may have let him down. They may at times irritate him by their behavior.
- But nothing breaks that bond of love. In fact, we never read of Paul stopping loving any of his people or any of the congregations. And everything he's going to say has to be said in love.
- [2 : 1 6] And he wants that love to be understood. Love precedes whatever follows. So he says, therefore, my beloved. In Philippians 4.1, he's later going to say, you who my love, long for, my joy and cry.
- Isn't that a beautiful way to explain the bond between a pastor and his people? He loves them. He longs for them. His joy is tied up with them.
- And so is his crown. Even heaven itself will always be somehow tied up with his relationship with these people. Why does he say that they're beloved?
- Well, see, in its own special way, and I think God is the supreme example, love is actually a very persuasive power. It's a very persuasive power.
- When you say to somebody, I love you, and then you go on to say something else to them, saying that you love them first actually matters.
- [3 : 2 3] It really does matter because it puts things into the right frame, into the right place. Never be afraid to express love, to affirm love.

Don't always assume, ah, they know I love them. They just know that they're loved by me. The reality is, as we said in our prayer, Satan is very much at work, often to try and bring division among God's people.

And one of the things he wants to destroy in every congregation is love. And especially love between those who are leading and those who are led, and between those who are helping one another in the gospel.

So love, the love of the pastor. If you have someone that you love for the Lord's sake, then tell them that they're loved. Text it.

Email it. Make sure that you say it somehow. Don't allow love to be the silent thing in our Scottish culture. The second thing here, the obedience of the Christian.

[4 : 32] Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence. Here he's talking about the Christian.

And he says the Christian has obeyed. The obedience of the Christian. He talks here about their past obedience. And he also talks about their present obedience.

You have always obeyed. So now, presently, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence. See, he knows that these have been obedient Christians.

See, that's the beautiful thing about being a Christian. It means that you are, by definition, obedient. You could not have become a Christian without becoming obedient.

You became a Christian by obeying the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. You heard the gospel. You heard the message. You believed it.

[5 : 37] You obeyed it. God said, come, you came. Obedience is absolutely at the core of your life as a Christian. And it's the same way with Jesus.

See, in the section that's before this, it's talking about Jesus being obedient. Being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the curse of death of the cross.

He did everything God the Father asked him. He was obedient. And that's a remarkable obedience that led to our salvation.

And when we become Christians, we obey him. We're obedient. Our conversion is in obedience to God, to Christ, and to the gospel message.

But that's only the beginning of the obedience. Paul, in this very letter, talks about their partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

[6 : 42] See, they keep on obeying. They keep on obeying, being in partnership with him in the gospel. They are working together for the gospel.

So the great apostle Paul and these Christians in Philippi, even some of them falling out with one another, but Paul says about them, you have an obedient partnership with me in the gospel.

And their obedience also leads them to live a life worthy of the gospel of God. And in all these ways, he's saying to them, I know you've been obedient.

You've been courageously obedient to me. You've been committed from the beginning of your Christian life until now. When did you last encourage a believer by reminding them that they have been obedient?

By reminding them of the things that they've done. The things that they have done by way of priority, by way of choice, by way of sacrifice, their willingness to serve, to share, to give.

[7 : 56] See, Paul's the kind of person, he says, you have always obeyed. And he says, you're going to keep obeying.

He tells them, he tells them, he says, I know you're going to keep obeying. This characteristic obedience that was there before is going to be there in the future, he says.

He says, so now, not only is in my presence, but much more in my absence. Isn't that amazing? Here's Paul, he's saying, you don't just obey when I'm there.

I know you obey when I'm not there. It's one thing for you to be in partnership with me in the gospel when I'm present with you. And then when I'm round the corner, you get on with your own lives and your own priorities.

No, says Paul, that's not you. It doesn't matter who's watching. It doesn't matter who's there, whether I'm there or not, whether I'm present or absent. You are obedient.

[8 : 59] And that's what I love about you, he says. And, of course, that's got to be true of us as Christians too. And if you're not yet a Christian, and maybe you're one of the youngsters who may be listening in just now, remember, when you're invited to come to Christ, we want you to obey the gospel.

We want you to come and he will accept you. Nobody who ever comes to God will be cast out by him. Nobody who ever comes to Christ would be thrown away from him.

You come. Come in obedience. Ask him to be your savior and he will accept you. But see, when you become a Christian, you can expect that you're going to have a long, long road of obedience ahead of you.

You may be young now. You'll grow up, God willing, and you will have a life of obedience to live. See, some people start following Christ and then they get tired of it.

It's just like a fad, a phase, and then they leave it off. They get tired. They're distracted. They're discouraged. And sometimes they started following Jesus just because it was exciting.

[10 : 16] It brought pleasure to them. But they drop off. Jesus warned about that in the parable of the sower and the seed. There are people, at the moment we don't see many tourists because we can't travel due to the lockdown.

But there are people who are religious tourists, even in lockdown. And they go from place to place looking for excitement. And people might even start following Jesus for excitement.

And then drop off when that wears off. But no. The real Christian. The real Christian. Those of you who are listening in and those of you who want to follow Christ.

Be prepared for a life of obedience. In many ways, be prepared for a life like Jesus. He became a human being.

Then a servant. Then lived the life of perfection. And then died. And died the sinner's death. And he did it all out of obedience.

[11 : 22] And he didn't stop. He didn't stop. He just kept going to the end. He loved them to the end. And that's what's expected of all of us.

Whatever the long road of obedience is. We must tread that road. The obedience of the Christian. The third thing here.

The presence of God. Therefore, my beloved. As you have always obeyed. So now. Not only is my presence. But much more in my absence. Work out your own salvation.

With fear and trembling. Why? For it is God who works in you. Both to will. And to work. For his good pleasure. I guess I'm still stuck.

In the authorized version. Here. For it is God who works in you. Both to will and to do. For his good pleasure. And. When you think of it.

[12 : 23] That's quite something. Isn't it? See. So it's one thing. To be told you're loved. It's another thing. To be told. You're obedient. In the past.

And you're expected. To be obedient. In the present. But then you're told. Actually. You might think. That's hard going.

To be obedient. All the time. Yes. But remember this. The presence of God. He's actually. Where is he? He's actually.

Within you. And that's a sobering thought. If somebody came. With a message. To say. That God.

Had arrived. In the soil. Of Scotland. You would say. Wow. If God. Was told. Was said.

[13 : 17] To arrive. In Livingston. Or Bathgate. Or wherever. You would say. Is that near? Yeah. I guess.

You'd have a sense. Of awe. And trembling. That. You could see him. At any minute. Be in his presence. At any minute. Because he's so near. But then.

When you're told. He's not just in your street. He's not just in your house. He's inside you. He's in you.

As if you were a temple. That you are a temple. And you think. That's sobering. You know. That's. That really.

Takes your breath away. God. Is so. So. Close. Of course. You should have fear. And trembling. We're talking about God.

[14 : 13] Here. The God. Who sent Jesus. To the world. The God. Who sent Jesus. To the cross. The God. Of heaven. The God.

Of hell. The God. Of holiness. The God. Of mercy. The God. Who cannot change. God. Of very God. And he lives.

Within you. I mean. That really. Is sobering. And the thing is. He does. He doesn't just come in. To our lives.

And into our hearts. Into our souls. He never leaves. Never leaves. This is 24-7 stuff. This is every day.

Of the year stuff. This is every day. Of your life stuff. He is. At work. Within you. That's. That's him. He's always.

[15 : 07] Always there. That can be so comforting. So. Really. Comforting. Especially. Especially. When you feel. You can't cope. With what God. Is calling from you.

In terms of obedience. And if you're thinking. Of following Christ. For the first time. It's really comforting. To know. You'll never walk alone.

You'll never. Walk alone. He will always be with you. If you're thinking. Of giving your life. To the Lord. Do it. I invite you to come.

I beg you to come. Nobody's too young. Nobody's too old. Come. And I'll tell you this. It will be difficult. But you will have blessings.

Blessings. That you won't be able. To understand. Just now. Till you come. And one of those. Is the presence. Of God. Within you. The thing is.

[16 : 08] He doesn't just come. Like somebody. On a holiday. And just. Resting. No. He comes.

To work. And. Remember. One of the most. Lovely things. About God. Is that he's the creator. He's the creator. He can do things.

That are quite remarkable. He can make a universe. Out of nothing. Not. Not. Not. Not anyone else. Who can do such a thing. God can do it. And when. Someone.

Like the creator. Lives within you. He can bring you. To will. And to do. Things that you would. Never. Have thought.

For a moment. You would be willing. And doing. He. Works within you. To will. In other words. When you will.

[17 : 03] Something. You want something. And when God comes. You end up. Having new desires. New longings. New yearnings.

Some things. Just. Begin. To be normal. For you. And it's. Because God. Is working. Within you. To desire. These things. To long.

For these things. And. To choose. These things. To will. These things. So. You may have been going. One way. And then God.

Says to you. Actually. That's not the right way. To go as a Christian. And you find yourself. Desiring to turn. And then you turn. And you go.

The other way. You choose. To go the other way. Why? Because God. Works within you. Both to will. And then to do. He.

[17 : 58] Brings the motivation. So you desire. To do it. He brings the ability. So that you can. Do it. And. He does it.

Because it changes. Your attitude. He changes. Your attitude. You want. To do things. That you never. Wanted to do before.

You're able. To do things. That you never. Wanted to do before. And why. Do you do them? It's because. You must. You feel.

As if there's a divine. Necessity. Be upon you. If you said to Jesus. Jesus. Why are you here. In this world? He would say.

I must be here. As he was coming. Near the cross. Why are you going. To the cross. Jesus. I must. When he was in the garden.

[18 : 56] Of Gethsemane. On the evening. Before his death. Why. Did he not turn back. Because he must. Go on. See. He's got this attitude.

And. And. When he went to the cross itself. Why did he not come down. When they nailed him to the cross. He could have leapt off that cross. But he didn't. He must be there.

See. He had that attitude. And. See. That's the way it is. With Christians. God is at work. Within us. And he's at work.

Within us. Such a way. That we. Will things. We desire them. And then choose to do them. And then we actually. Do them. And they're not just one of us.

It's a lifetime. A long road. Of doing. We. We end. As Christians. We. We. We. Find that we do far more repentance.

[19 : 55] Than we ever did before. We became a Christian. I've been a Christian now. For. Decades. And I can honestly say.

I am repenting more now. Than I did at the beginning of my Christian life. And that's. That's the way it is. You're turning from sin. Why?

Because. Marvelously. God is at work. Within us. To will. And to do. Of his good pleasure. You're choosing. The.

The hard path. A path. That you thought. I'll never do that. But you end up doing it. And you say. I must do it. It's a matter.

The stage of life. Or the age of life. Or the obstacles. Before you. You do it. Why? Because God says. You must do it. God's at work. Within you. Both do will and do.

[20 : 48] Of his good pleasure. How can I mortify. Such sins? How can I love. Such sinful people? How can I love.

Saints. Who upset me? How can I serve God. In a hostile world? How can I share the gospel? Will. How can I share the gospel?

God is at work. Within you. Both to will and do. Of his good pleasure. How can I cope with this. Level of. Endless pain.

And disappointment. And suffering. God is at work. Within you. To will. And to do. To do. It's because of the divine initiative.

That there can be a human response. Without me. Says Jesus. You can do nothing. Zero. Nothing.

[21 : 50] But see. When we have Christ. We can bear much fruit. When God is at work.

Within us. Wow. Amazing things happening. So anybody who thinks that. Becoming a Christian. Is somehow. Becoming a member.

Of the most passive. Group. In human history. Absolute. Nonsense. I don't believe. In passive. Christianity. Why?

Because God. Is at work. Within us. Both to will. And do. Of his good pleasure. The presence. Of God. Himself. And then.

The next one. Number four. Here. The road. Of salvation. The road. Of salvation. See. That's what he says. Work out. Your own salvation.

[22 : 44] With fear. And trembling. See. Salvation. A strange thing. Salvation. Salvation. Rescue. Being delivered. You were in danger.

And then. There's a sense. But you're out. Out of danger. You've been saved. You've been delivered. You've been rescued. Since last October. For reasons.

Personal to myself. I can say. That probably. The verb. That I use. Most in my prayer. Is. Rescue me. Lord.

Rescue. Rescue me. Or rescue. Someone else. Rescue. Rescue. Rescue. Rescue. Rescue. Rescue. Now.

See. When it comes to myself. I've been a Christian. For decades. I could say. To you. I'm saved. I have salvation.

[23 : 43] I think. That. That is. Absolutely. True. And salvation. Is very much. The work of God. Isn't it? Read. For example.

Romans 4. 5. To anyone. Who does not work. But trust. God. To justifies. The ungodly. Their faith. Is credited. As righteousness. You don't work. To become a Christian.

No. God's done it all. For you. In Christ. You come. And receive. The gift. It's a gift. Of God. And you receive. That gift. Of salvation.

First Thessalonians. 5. 9. Paul writes again. God did not appoint us. To suffer wrath. But to receive. To receive. Salvation. Through our Lord.

Jesus Christ. It's a gift. To be received. It's not something. You work for. So there's a sense. Of course. That salvation. Is always.

[24 : 39] Always a gift. So what does Paul mean here. When he says. Work out. Your own salvation. Well.

I think what he means. Is this. When you become a Christian. When you're saved. That's the beginning. Of the rescue. And you are safe forever.

But you are always. To work out. Salvation. Into every. Area. Of your life. There's not going to be. Any area. That's going to be.

Untouched. By the salvation. That God. Has done. In you. In Christ. By the spirit. You. Are a saved people.

Now. You are to live. A saved people. You to work out. What that salvation. Looks like. In every day. Of your life.

[25 : 36] Every. Event. That you face. Every trial. Every experience. Work out. Your salvation. Where do you belong?

When you come. And fill in a forum. Sometimes. You're asked. To state. Which country. You're a citizen of. And I'm always torn.

Do I say the UK. Or Scotland. And some of my family. Who are. You know. Very pro Scotland. Would say. You should always put in Scotland.

I say. I'm just put in the UK. Because I like. The unity. Of the UK. But you know. I've yet. To put in a forum. That I'm a citizen.

In heaven. Because. That is true. That's where my citizenship is. That is the centre. Of my universe. That's where my identity is.

[26 : 37] I. Have the centre. Of my life. The throne of God. So do you. As a Christian. You're a citizen. Of God. Of heaven.

And. When you're told. To work out. Your salvation. You're being told. To work out. How to live.

As a Christian. Who's a citizen. Of heaven. But still living. On earth. And that. Brings the whole. Impact.

Of the gospel. Into every. Area. Of your life. Walk. Worthy. Of the calling. That you received. God called you.

When you became a Christian. Guess what. He's still calling you. Every day. In every situation. He's calling you. Walk worthy.

[27 : 34] Now. Philippians. Of course. They. That congregation. Got problems. People. Are falling out. With one another. So when Paul. Saying to them. Work out. Your own salvation.

With fear. And trembling. He's basically. Saying to them. Remember. God's at work. Within you. Don't take him. For granted. In fear. And trembling. It's very sobering.

God's at work. Within you. Well. If he is. Work out. Your relationships. Learn. To love one another. Properly. Stop falling out.

With one another. Let the attitude. That Christ has. And has. Fill. Your whole life. And especially. Your relationships.

With one another. Stop falling out. That's what. Work out. Your own salvation. Might mean. In Philippine. But it also.

[28 : 27] Of course. Has. All sorts. Of implications. For our. Personal lives. Doesn't it? When God. Says to you. Today. Work out.

Your salvation. With fear. And trembling. Your own salvation. Work out. How the gospel. Is meant. To impact. Your life. There may be. That calling.

That God. Has called you. To. Maybe that. Desire. That you've had. For a while. And you're not sure. Exactly. What to do. With it. Do you rise up.

And take. The mantle. Do you go forward. In obedience. Do. Do you do that? Is that what God. Means for you. Today. In working out. Your salvation.

Is it that there's. Some sin. In your life. And it's been there. For years. And you're. You're just. Letting it. Fester. And it leaves you. Feeling like a hypocrite.

[29 : 24] I. Are you. Are you going to. Deal with that sin. Are you going to. Plead with God. Are you. Going to. Weep before him. And ask for his strength. To be made perfect. In your weakness.

As you deal with his sin. Is that what. Work out your own salvation. Means in that. Or. Do you have. Maybe loved ones. Or.

People in your street. And you just want to share. The gospel with them. You don't want to hide. Your light. Under. The bed. Or. Under. A dish.

As Hector. Was leading us. On Wednesday. We. We want to. Be salt and light. We. We want. To go out. And share the gospel. To do it graciously.

But also. Provocatively. We want. Our speech. To be seasoned. With salt. We want to do it. And maybe. When. When God says to us.

[30 : 18] Today. Work out. Your own salvation. Maybe. That's what we've got to do. Take time. To think. How. Will I share the gospel. With.

A. Or B. Or C. Whichever names. Comes up in your mind. Do you have someone. That you want to share the gospel with. Doesn't have to be all 100% of the gospel in one go.

But. Do you want to begin. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Maybe you want to be a disciple. Who makes disciples. Of course you do.

Because every Christian. Is called to do that. Disciples who make disciples. Make disciples of every nation. Nobody is not called.

In some way. To that work. Of making disciples. Parents do it. Siblings do it. Pastors do it.

[31 : 20] Elders do it. Deacons do it. And friends do it. Neighbours do it. Salvation's got to be lived out.

In life. How long have you been a Christian. Why haven't you burnt out.

Why haven't you given up. Why haven't you gone back. You faced. Terrible dark days.

Why have you not given up. Because God. Has been at work. And is at work within you. So that you will.

And do. You fear him. You tremble before him. But you are so thankful. That he's there.

[32 : 20] It's made the difference. He's made the difference. In your life. You're far from perfect. Absolutely. But you're not what you were.

You've been working out salvation. In your life. And then. Why? The pleasure of God. The pleasure of God.

Work out your own salvation. With fear and trembling. Never taking God for granted. For it is God who works in you. Both to will and to do work.

For his good pleasure. For his good pleasure. See. God is the only one. Who has the right.

To let his pleasure. Determine. Everybody else's pleasure. He's the only one. Who has the right. To say.

[33 : 20] What pleases me. Is what you must make. The object. Of your desire. And your obedience. Every day. So I guess.

We've got to find out. What pleases him. We've got to find out. What brings glory to him. That's why we've got to read the Bible. People. Can't be a Christian.

Without reading the Bible. It's not just. Anything that pleases God. He's God. You can't just. Bring anything.

And expect God. To be happy. You can't bring that. Which costs you nothing. You can't do that.

Because he's God. And his pleasure. Really matters. You know this though. He's told us. He's told us.

- [34 : 14] In the New Testament part. I could talk about the Old Testament. But he's told in the New Testament. That he's at work. In the world. Restoring the universe. To himself.
- Through the gospel. Through the church. Through Christians. By the Holy Spirit. Under the Lordship of Jesus. And you know what. That gives God.
- Absolute. Pleasure. Absolute. Pleasure. See when somebody becomes a Christian. Like you perhaps.
- There's joy in the presence of the angel. And it's God's joy. He is thrilled. When a prostitute comes. He's thrilled.
- When a tax collector is saved. He's thrilled. When people. Are brought into the kingdom. Of course he is. And when any of these people.
- [35 : 11] Then get involved in gospel work. Whether in their own families. Or friends. Or in leading ministries. In various ways. He is thrilled.
- He's thrilled. And when people live out the life. The gospel. In their own communities. In their own families. In their own congregations. You can be absolutely sure.
- There's pleasure. In the heart of God. It brings glory. To him. After all. What are Christians at best?
- Their fellow workers. Of God. Fellow servants. With Jesus. Fellow shepherds.
- With the chief shepherd. Fellow witnesses. With the Holy Spirit. The Father. The Son.
- [36 : 12] And the Spirit. They know what they're doing. Every day. And gospel work. Is at the heart of that. God. So when you work out. Your salvation.
- When you work out. What it means to be rescued. And delivered. And live the gospel life. In the circumstances. In which you are in. Lockdown or no lockdown.
- Suffering or joy. Rich or poor. Ill health. Or great health. Whatever it is.
- Be at work. For his pleasure. See Paul. Is the one who wrote this. Paul. Maybe you feel.
- If any of us. Had written this. Would sound terribly hollow. But here's a man in prison. Writing this. And nobody could have said. He's only saying it.
- [37 : 09] He doesn't really believe it. Absolute nonsense. Do you know. Paul's in prison. Of course he believes it. You're somebody. Who practices.
- What he preaches. It's a long road. Of salvation. You don't know. What lies ahead of you. You can look back.
- And see. The long road. Behind you. And if you're. Hoping to come to Christ. Just now. You don't know. What lies ahead of you. But I invite you to come.
- It will be a long road. Of salvation. One way or another. I don't know. What will be there. But I'm absolutely. Convinced. That God.
- Will allow you. To face no temptation. To which you need. To succumb. That he will give you. No challenge. That you will be.
- [38 : 04] Unable. To cope with. Because he. He is at work. Within you. Do come. There's nothing. More exciting.
- Than the Christian life. Paul knew it. Even though he was in prison. There was a long road. Behind him. A shorter road.
- Before him. He wasn't going to be. More than a couple of years. In the world. After this. That's okay. For him. To live was Christ.
- To die was game. He was somebody. That had things. Just worked out. In his mind. He was working out. Salvation. And I hope you. Do the same thing.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father. Your word. Is your word. And it never changes. Your calling. Is not one.

[38 : 59] That you will ever take back. Your commitments. Will never be broken. Your covenant. Is an everlasting covenant. Your love.

Is an everlasting love. You are so. Committed to us. And you are bringing us. To be committed. To you. Lord.

Truly. We can see. We don't want. To turn back. My flesh and heart. Doth faint and fail. But God. Doth fail me never.

Lord. Thank you. For the truth. Of what we have. Looked at tonight. In your word. Be at work. Within us. We ask it. In the name of Jesus. Amen.