

# Our Work or God's Work?

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[ 0 : 00 ] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Go ahead and please turn with me and your Bibles to Philippians chapter 2. We are back as I promised. Philippians chapter 2, we're going to continue our study of this wonderful, wonderful book.

Wonderfully joyous book this morning. And I'm pumped. You know, in the classic movie Father of the Bride, George Banks played by Steve Martin.

This may date me a little bit, talk about this movie, but he's the father of the bride, quite obviously. And during engagement season, he comes home to find his daughter Annie, fiance.

Annie's fiance had given her a blender. Now, George Banks, in a way that only Steve Martin can do, expressed, hey, this seems like a pretty good gift. A blender, right?

[ 1 : 03 ] He's excited, but Annie is distraught. She's like, in a way that only she can do, why would he give me a blender? I mean, maybe a new phone through tears, or an art book, or something for the apartment, but why a blender?

What's he trying to say? Any husband or any boyfriend ever gotten that question? What are you trying to say in this gift? Does he want me to be one of those 1950s women who just stay home and cook all day?

And so George, Steve Martin, decides he needs to intervene and takes the fiance out to explain. And I love these sentences. These are just great. He says, Annie is a very passionate person. And passionate people tend to overreact at times. Annie comes from a long line of major overreactors. Me? I can definitely lose it.

My mother? A nut. My grandfather's stories about him are legendary. The good news is, however, that this overreacting tends to get proportionally less by generations.

[ 2 : 12 ] So your kids could be normal. Passionate people. People who tend to overreact. People who lose it. You know, and that acting out, that passion, that overreacting.

I mean, nowhere is it more better illustrated or acted out than in the hands of Steve Martin. And it's just totally hilarious. But in real life, you know, anger is not funny at all.

It splits marriages, churches, and businesses. It takes thriving relationships to a simmering cold war or even to bitter resentment.

It comes out in every day in patience, behind the wheel, in traffic, but also in all-out fights in the living room or in other areas.

It is a most destructive sin. And yet it's a sin common to us all, right? Anger is something we all struggle with. One counselor said it like this. The shoes of anger are a pair of open-heeled slippers.

[ 3 : 12 ] One size indeed fits all. I come this morning to say, how do we fight anger?

You know, it seems so natural, so simple, and yet so hard to stop. It's so hard to keep it from coming out. And is our only hope, like Mr. Banks says, that it would just get proportionately less by generation?

Is that the hope that I transfer to my child, that it's just going to get proportionately less? Or is there something else that we can hope for? Is there really hope for change? Not just with anger, but what about other reaction?

What about other sins? As we dive back into Philippians this morning, Paul brings us to the heart of these struggles with sin and uncovers a path of hope.

These verses we're going to study this morning are absolutely incredible. And they get into the details of our life. They tell us why we can be hope-filled and why we can have confidence that we

will, by the grace of God, actually change.

[ 4 : 20 ] Let's look at God's Word with that type of expectancy, can't we? That He would meet us and change us in this type of way. Verse 12, chapter 2, verse 12.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

That is the Word of God. The only authoritative and inerrant Word of God we will hear this morning. Before I dive in, let me just set the context a little bit for you, because we have been out of it for a few weeks, or maybe this is your first time and you're trying to figure out what is going on.

But that therefore, you know, every time you see a therefore in Scripture, it's pointing back to something. And this therefore takes us all the way back to chapter 1, verse 27. So if you'll look there with me, maybe one page or turn in your Bible, but right there in verse 27, if you remember, Paul at that point had just powerfully proclaimed and reminded us that we are in Christ, united to Him by faith.

[ 5 : 39 ] To die is gain, is what he says, and to live is Christ. What he means by that is our lives are so bound up in Christ that all that we are is all about Him. And that's where we find our identity.

And so in verse 27, if you look there, he says, only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. He's saying, live as a citizen in the world and a manner worthy of your citizenship in heaven. Let your conduct in the world be worthy of the conduct of that citizenship you have in heaven. So let your calling in Christ shape every aspect of how you live is what he's saying.

And then he gets into chapter 2, which we studied in December, and he begins with these exhortations. He's saying, do nothing from selfish ambition. Be united. Look to the interests of others.

And these exhortations keep coming throughout the rest of this book. And it's in this context, in the midst of these exhortations, these commands, that our text comes. Not just with another exhortation, but with the secret of how it all works.

[ 6 : 47 ] How does it work to let your life be worthy of a manner, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ? It says, a great banner. But how does that banner get into the details of Tuesday morning?

That's where he's going right here. It's the secret. It's how the things we work in faith change us with God's help. So in a word, where we're going is produce the fruit of your salvation, fully relying on God's power.

Produce the fruit of your salvation, fully relying on God's power. And we're going to break this out in three points. First one is our work.

Our work. This point focuses on verse 12, quite obviously, and says, we must work hard. Look down there with me again. Therefore, my beloved, as you always obeyed. Second clause there. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. With fear and trembling. You know, in many places in Scripture, when God commands us to do something, he says, in light of what Christ has done, obey.

[ 7 : 52 ] But here, the command comes first. The command is accented. The command is serious with fear and trembling. And we are to feel its force. Work it out.

We must work hard, is what he's saying. But if we're honest, that's a curious phrase. And it work out your salvation.

Salvation is, by definition, something worked out for us. Something we have received. I mean, we don't work out for a thing, or we work out for a thing we don't have, not for something we do have. We work out for things like biceps that we don't have, not for something, I won't fill in that blank, that we do have. Or maybe this is some sort of oxymoron.

Work out your salvation kind of like jumbo shrimp. Shrimp are quite obviously one of the smallest fishes in the sea. Or civil war. Or small crowd.

[ 8 : 55 ] Or my favorite, freezer burn. I guess, you know, dry ice does burn you like that. But freezer burn. So we've got to unpack this phrase a little bit and tease it out.

And then notice, firstly, that Paul does not say work for your salvation. He doesn't say work for it. Salvation is eternal and an invisible work of grace.

So we're not called to work for our salvation. We simply receive it. Finished and complete. No one who walked through the Red Sea talked about the way they walked. And so we don't talk about the

things we've done because it's all been a work of grace.

We've simply received it. We've come with empty hands. So whatever this text is saying, it's not saying that. But secondly, notice that Paul does not say work is unnecessary in your salvation. So he doesn't say work is unnecessary in your salvation. He doesn't say because of all that Christ has done, because of the way he came and the way he was obedient on the cross, and because you are saved through him.

[ 9 : 58 ] He does not say chill out. He doesn't say relax. He doesn't say loosen up. You're so uptight. He doesn't say take a break.

You know, there's a misunderstanding of grace that says something very similar to that. But Paul says work is necessary. Work is required.

Effort is required. But what does it mean to work out this salvation that we've received? I think. It seems to me to mean work to make your salvation visible and evident right now.

Work to make your salvation visible and evident right now. You know, some passages talk about a Christian life like a race, if you remember 1 Corinthians 9. Or some talk about it like a fight, like 1 Timothy 6, or as a contest of some time.

I think behind this word here is something like gardening, which I happen to know nothing about. But my neighbor knows a ton. You know, the idea seems to be, I don't know why I gave you that fact, but just in case you're wondering, the idea seems to be something like put forth ceaseless effort to bring your salvation to growth, to health, to bear fruit, and to maturity.

[ 11 : 22 ] Put forth ceaseless effort to make your salvation grow. You know, it's not enough to drop a seed into the ground and expect it to be fruitful.

Right? We carefully select the soil. I mean, we take out the topsoil we have there when you're in East Tennessee, and we bring in topsoil with better minerals.

We water it. We fertilize it. We prune it, you know, which just means kind of you trim it back, and you make sure it can grow and fill out in ways that it ought to.

We care for it. We fight off the pest, the deer that might be coming down, munching on our tomatoes or whatever, or the squirrels, and we agonize. You talk to a gardener or a farmer, there's no days off.

You know what I mean? It's the thing you're anxious about in the middle of the night. You can't go on vacation for a couple weeks and forget about your crop and expect it to be fruitful when you get back. Right? And so, too, with Christian life.

[ 12 : 27 ] I think what he's saying is the salvation in which God sovereignly and visibly acted upon your soul to bring you from death to life, put forth the effort to make it visible. Bring it to life.

Don't keep your Christianity between yourself and God. Put it on. Another place he uses another metaphor. Put it on. Wear new clothes. Wear them out into the public so that all may see who you are.

It's not okay to keep it on the inside. Don't keep your Christianity between yourself and God. He said, don't keep it to Sunday morning. There he says, not only in my presence, but much more in my absence.

This idea that Christianity ought not be tucked away during some times of the week and brought out during others. Do you see? We're to bring it forth.

We're going to devote ourselves to it, just like if we were a farmer, it was our primary task. Like we're just trying to bring this thing out. We're trying to bring salvation, make it fruitful.

[ 13 : 34 ] So how do we do that? He continues by continuous and serious effort. Continuous and serious effort. You know, continuous effort.

The verb here assumes effort's begun. The verb is really like keep on working. Keep on working. It assumes it's already begun, so that's all he's trying to say.

And I love the way he said it. Just keep on. Just keep working. Keep pressing on. But it also encourages us to have serious effort. Thoughtful, earnest, desperate effort with fear and trembling. The idea is not fear and trembling, that we're fearful of losing the salvation we've secured in Christ. But fear and trembling, that we're serious and desperate, wanting to be fully prepared for that final day.

Just like Christ shared so many parables about being ready, keeping your lamp lit, so to speak. And so too in our own lives, we're trying to bring forth the fruit of the gospel, the fruit of salvation out and display it in our lives, so that we're fully ready on that last day.

[ 14 : 42 ] No one who goes to heaven is going to be a surprise to everyone around them. Every Christian is going to bear that fruit, so that passing to heaven isn't a giant leap, but just the next step.

And so there's this continuous and serious effort that we're not to be swayed from until he returns. Now, lest we miss the obvious, the implication here is growth in the Christian life is possible. Growth in the Christian life is possible. It's precisely here that I think we misstep what our work is. We can think, I can't do this.

I am who I am, you know, my warts and peculiarities and things like that. Not literal warts, you know, I won't give you any update status on those, but, you know, my personality defects are who I am and I can't do about it.

Or maybe we say, what you see is what you get. And no wife's ever been encouraged by that statement. And so we can think kind of like that, though, even if we're not willing to say it and work half-heartedly on where we need to change.

[ 16 : 10 ] Or, perhaps even worse, we can begin to think that the only work pleasing to God is for us to continually repent and look to Christ. There's a way of thinking about Christianity, about the gospel, that we can think we know we're sinners and we know everything we do is shot through with sin.

And so we conclude that there's nothing for us to do but look to Christ. Here's what I mean. Some people will say it like this, and these are actual quotes. Christian, you cannot obey the law. Your certain failure is a means to show forth the grace of God when you repent. Another person says, we don't need more lists of how to be a better husband, parent, or Christian. We need more grace. Or one is so bold to say, my life strategy for today is fail, repent, and repeat. Now, are those true? In some ways, yes. Wonderfully, yes. But in other ways, no. And here's what I mean. They leave the subtle impression that growth in the Christian life is not possible.

[ 17 : 22 ] As if the awareness of my failures comes only to show me the grace to repent. As if God's law and his list come only so that I might see my sins.

So in the face of this sin and failure and weakness, the takeaway does seem to be right. Fail, repent, and repeat. But is that all the Bible teaches?

Is that all the Christian life is? Is that what Christ died for? I mean, does God command us to obey just to teach us that we cannot obey? No. The gospel offers so much more.

Look at me in Romans 6. Actually, we have it for you on the screen, so even quicker. This is Romans 6. This is what I want read at my funeral if you're still around then. And he says, For if we've been united with him in a death like his, if we've been united with Christ in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For the one who has died has been set free from sin.

[ 18 : 30 ] He's just saying that if we've been united with Christ, so if we're united with Christ, then when he died, we died with him. And when he rose again, his spirit, in the same way that it raised Christ from the dead, is the spirit that lives in us.

And the one who's died has been set free is what he says. So you must consider yourselves dead, descended, and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey its passions.

What he's saying is if you're united with Christ, you've died with Christ, and now you're raised with him, and so therefore let not sin reign. So the biblical gospel does not merely cancel the guilt of sin. It frees us from the power of sin and promises that our fight against sin will be successful. You see, because you have died to sin in Christ and been set free from sin through Christ, let not sin therefore reign.

The gospel does not call us to cease working. It actually announces that the true work of sin killing and sin fighting can begin and will be successful.

[ 19 : 43 ] The gospel not only announces growth is possible, it announces growth is certain. Again and again, God commands us to turn from sin, not to watch us fail miserably, but with the fresh supplies of the Spirit to watch us bear fruit and walk in the freedom and joy of the gospel.

So this is the truth. You can change. You can change. Even in that area where you think you can't change, you can change.

Praise God, you will change when Jesus raises you up on the last day, but you can change right now. It doesn't matter how far you've fallen. It doesn't matter how bad you've blown it. It doesn't matter how miserable you feel or how abysmal your situation feels.

And this is not the latest advice of a life hacker trying to find a better and more productive you. This is true and eternal wisdom, unveiling the secret of true change.

Your faith-filled effort can make a massive difference in your life. I love the way the hymn says it. Ponder anew what the Almighty might do if with His love He befriend you.

[ 20 : 59 ] The Bible never tells us to lower our expectations. It always encourages us to raise Him. To raise Him.

There's no... It's supposed to be hope-filled. You know, I love the story of the thief on the cross. I think it's just a brilliant, hope-filled encounter. I mean, there's so many encounters that Jesus had, obviously, were brilliant and hope-filled.

But I love this story. Christ is crucified between two thieves. One goes along with everything He's always done and mocks Him. But one, with a feeble breath of faith, says, Would you remember me when you come into your kingdom?

The Lord says, Today, you'll be with me in paradise. And I love this. Captured forever in the pages of history, in the pages of our Bible, we know this story not as a thief, but as a thief who believed. We know Him not as a thief, but as a thief who believed. A thief who had the faith to dream that God could indeed reverse the proclamation over His life.

[ 22 : 09 ] And so His destiny has changed. That's not the story we know about Him. We don't know how many places He knocked off. We know about the One who put His faith in Christ. And that's the truth of what God can do.

By faith, in that very last moment. It's as if in bold letters, the gospel is saying, There's grace enough for you to change. There's grace enough for you to change.

Quite obviously, there's grace enough for you to come to Christ this morning. And if you're here and you wonder, This is a strange meeting and you're trying to figure it out. In some ways, I understand. But in other ways, if this is strange in the sense that you don't know where you fit in.

I want to invite you, because of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to come and draw near to God. Not because you can in and of yourself, but because Christ died to bring you to God.

That's what 1 Peter 2 says. So would you come to Him? He suffered the righteous for the unrighteous, so that you might approach Him as unrighteous.

[ 23 : 15 ] And yet, be proclaimed righteous through Christ. And worship Him without fear. Do you want to change? Do you want to grow? I mean, for all of us, how do we want to be known?

What do we want our kids to remember? What's it like growing up under our roof? What do we want our friends to talk about when we walk away? The promise here is you can change. But it also says you must work hard.

All the change God intends to do in your life, He will not do without your effort. That's the truth of Scripture. He's not coming, whip you away in a way that you're just completely passive, you know, and suddenly change you to be a more loving person.

He's going to work in the details of your life as you put forth that. Faith without works is dead.

Produce the fruit of your salvation, fully relying on God's power.

Second point, God's work. So our work, God's work. The point focuses on verse 13. God will work in us.

[ 24 : 26 ] Look at verse 13 again. For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Literally, what it says is the one who is working mightily in you is God.

The one who's working mightily in you is God. That's who He is. That's His name. He set His throne in the heavens. He rules over all. He possesses all authority in heaven and on earth. He sees He needs nothing, gives to all humankind life and breath and everything.

And yet He, that one, is working in you. Now, I'll label this God's work. Last point, our work.

Now, it's not as if there's kind of a division of labor here. Like, you, Lord, take shipping and I'll take receiving or something like that. There's something else even more mysteriously and wonderfully going on here.

The idea is God works while we work and in our work to make our work fruitful. I'll say that again because that was a lot of work. God works while we work and in our work to make our work fruitful.

[ 25 : 29 ] You know, many times Scripture exhorts us to live and to obey in light of what God has done. But here we're exhorted to obey in light of what God is doing.

Do you see? Sometimes we're commanded to obey because of what He's done. But here we're commanded to obey because of what He's doing. We work out and God works in.

God's not dead. God's alive and works continually in us as we work out the faith entrusted to us. The idea is that there is a new, fresh, continuous outpouring of grace in our life such that He is at work in us. Every step we make of obedience, God's grace is eager this day to pour in and to work in so that we might change.

And so how does this happen? And this is where this text just gets wonderfully specific. Look down there with me. In verse 12, He says, Sorry, lost my place.

[ 26 : 35 ] For it's God who works in you both to will and to work. To will. God works in us to want the right things.

God works in us to want the right things. He changes our desires and our longings. He calls us to love holiness. And He calls us to want the right things. He works in us such that in our hearts we love what He loves and hates what He hates.

You know, the obedience that God's trying to work in our lives is not similar to the whiny reluctance of a three-year-old. What God's working in our life and what He wants and what He's going for is the work that He works in us such that we obey from the heart.

Reflexively. Reflexively. That we love Him. We don't do these things and just begrudgingly press through the Christian life.

But He's pressing us in such a way that we obey Him out of the overflow of our hearts. And if you've been a Christian for any length of time, God's begun to do this.

[ 27 : 41 ] You know, one of the most dangerous things we can do with our children is watch old movies. What I mean is, we started to watch movies we watched before we were saved.

I'm like, this is a great movie. I could fill in the blank with so many parental blunders in this area. But this is a great movie. Our kids are going to love it, Kim. Let's watch this.

Oh, my goodness! Cover your eyes! Run for the hill! You know, what was going on in that movie, you know? And there's that aspect. Yeah, let's don't watch this with our kids. This is crazy, but there's also the aspect in which we can't watch what we used to watch.

Emotionally, we can't do it. I never walked out of a movie until I was a Christian. And I've walked out of a lot. So it's not worth ten bucks.

Emotionally, I can't do it. Now, that never occurred to me. I had a favorite movie before I was a Christian. I can't watch it. Emotionally, I can't even endure it.

[ 28 : 45 ] That's God working to will in us. And Christian life's not begrudgingly pulling up the bootstraps. Christian life's asking God to do that thing.

Such that we love what He loves. And to keep on doing it. Keep on pressing on. He also says He works in us to do the right things. He works in us to will and to work.

There's that word again. Third time. Work in this passage. The idea is God doesn't just change what we want. He changes what we do. He who began a good work in you.

Same word. Chapter 1, verse 3. As we're reminded in chapter 1. Is the one who brings that work to completion. And this is how He does it. God brings His work that He began by His command or by His calling us from death to life in Christ.

And He works it in us such that we want the right thing. We love holiness. And we love being close to Him. And we do the right things. And Paul tells us to spur us on.

[ 29 : 45 ] That's why this passage is in here. Not to level us, but to spur us on. To keep on trusting. Keep on fighting. To keep on working. To keep on pressing forward. In case you're living under a rock, the NFL playoffs are upon us.

And can we all just agree in the Lord that the Patriots not win, you know? I know Brady's the goat, but I'm over-goated, you know? But for those of us who are watching today, nothing will be less exciting or insightful than the post-game interviews.

I just love them just for the humor of them. One writer commented on them like this. There are few things in life as uninsightful as a post-game interview. Don't get me wrong.

They're not always bad. But in general, you don't expect to hear original insights surface 30 seconds after the game has ended. What you expect is a lot of talk about how we never gave up. How we believed in ourselves.

How we gave it 110%. How these kids deserve all the credit in the world. Really? Really? All of it? The whole world? No credit for anyone else?

[ 30 : 56 ] Part of the problem, he continues, is that the interviewers ask nine questions like, you caught the pass at midfield, slipped past the safety, and then sprinted to the pylon.

Tell us what you were thinking. Run? You know? Hurry? I don't know. You know, those interviews, those meaningless phrases just abound.

You know? We just didn't get the job done. You know, after a loss, we just didn't get the job done. Oh, really? You know, they made the big plays and we didn't. Hmm. Great.

Or if you won, you know, the 110% thing. We just stuck to our game plan and everything else worked out. That's right. You know, it's just like falling off a log, I guess. But you know, sometimes, and unfortunately, when we try to encourage one another towards godliness, we say things that aren't that much more helpful.

We say things like, let go and let God. We say things like, stop trusting, or stop trying and start trusting.

[ 31 : 58 ] We say things like, look up and look out, or keep believing in the promise, or give it up to the Lord. But the Bible, again and again, motivates us in better ways.

It tells us to remember the cross, right, quite obviously, and show, live our lives in thankfulness. It reminds us of the rewards that lie ahead. It reminds us that we're serving not just somebody else, but we're serving the Lord Jesus Christ, what Colossians 3 says.

But this motivation, I believe, is the best of all. This one works. This one will get you out of bed in the morning. This one builds our faith and keeps us moving. God works while we work and in our work to make our work fruitful.

Don't give up. God's at work. Don't despair. God's at work. God's within you. God's working in you. What a promise that is. Yes, we're going to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, but we're going to work it out knowing that it is He that works in us, willing to work for His good pleasure.

So produce the fruit of salvation, fully relying on God's power. So how do we bring this together? Point three, how does this work? How do we put this together in the real moments of our life on Tuesday morning?

[ 33 : 12 ] How do we work hard and yet trust in God to work through us? John Piper says, The biggest challenge of living a Christian life is how you act in such a way that another is acting for you.

How do you put forth effort and yet put it forth in reliance upon God? John Piper puts together in this acronym that I'm going to teach you this morning.

We don't usually teach, give you like application type things like this, but I think it's helpful. He called it APTAP. So I guess it doesn't stand for anything. It's just put together.

But, yeah, we got that for you. First is admit you can't do it. I don't know what the Mount Everest thing in your life is, but admit you can't do it.

So that's the A, right? P, pray for God's help and a particular fruit. Trust a particular promise.

[ 34 : 23 ] There's that word again. The idea is you're going after something particular. T, A, act. That's that second A. And then P, praise God when he delivers.

APTAP. Take something like anger. You know, none of us are going to conquer anger by trying to think of it ahead of time. You're trying to lay out our day. When could I possibly be angry or something like that? Or just willpower.

You know, willpower works with anger until it doesn't. But we won't change without God working in us, without depending on God.

So where do you get angry? Just reflect on that. I'm talking about five minutes, three minutes.

Maybe when your children slowly wear down your patience until you blurt out hurtful words.

When you have to interact with the same boss who never notices what you do for him. When you don't get what you think you deserve. When you relate to your spouse that, after 20 years, still does that thing that annoys you.

[ 35 : 31 ] So to fight it, you admit that you can't do it. Lord, I can't be patient with these kids on my own.

I can't be joyful in that workplace. I don't think I can walk through another day through this disappointment without frustration. I can't do it, you know. That's what John 15 says.

Apart from me, you can do nothing. We're just agreeing with the scripture. P, pray for a particular fruit. Pray for God's help. Father, give me peace. Give me calmness.

Give me patience. Give me whatever. Trust a particular promise. Like lean on something, you know. Lean on a promise. Act.

I love the fact that that's included in there. The idea is don't wait until you feel it. Act kind. Act patient. Act joyful. The feelings will come. I promise. No one's ever forgiven somebody because they felt it.

[ 36 : 28 ] Or maybe. Maybe anomalies happen here and there. Everyone's forgiven someone out of faith in the promise. And then suddenly you feel warm.

Right? Suddenly you feel warm. Because it follows that. And then praise God when he delivers. And you don't have to do an acronym. You don't have to do that. But you do have to do something to put forth effort that makes you rely on God's power.

That's the truth. Do it again and again and again and again and again until your life begins to change. That's what this text is saying. Just keep doing it. Keep doing it. You know, one person says, work like it all depended on me and sleep like it didn't.

And if you have trouble sleeping, then you're probably not working. Or you're not getting that balance right. But teach it to your children. I mean, discipline is easy, but this is hard.

Yeah, I remember one time Rev came home from kindergarten and he announced that he was shy. He said, I'm shy, Dad. I'm a shy boy. And I said, where did you hear that?

[ 37 : 32 ] You know, we just didn't use that word. And I'm not like a word Nazi or something like that. But I said, where did you hear that? And I thought about it a little bit. And I just said, you can't be shy. Because God can't help shy people.

He helps the fearful. You get what I'm saying there? Is that if he's just shy, then that's his card he can play at any moment. But if he's fearful, then he can run to the Lord and learn something and lean on the Lord.

Do you see what I'm saying there? And so we began to work. Not impressive stuff, but Rev would be shy and fearful about doing just about everything. And so we began to look and work and to study. What would it mean like to cry out to God?

What would it mean like to trust something? What would it mean like to remember, fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I will strengthen you. I'll help you. I'll uphold you with my mighty right hand. What does it look like to step out in faith in those moments and to thank God after?

It's not just telling our kids to stop something. And it's given them tools to walk it out, to hold on to these truths and to press forward. Finally, most days our fight against sin will be thoroughly ordinary.

[ 38 : 43 ] We'll wake up to the same temptation we faced before and we'll live to face them another day. But this passage provides vital perspective that God is building something magnificent through our measly efforts.

Something that pleases Him. All of this for His good pleasure and something that brings Him glory. And this perspective and that truth will supply all the hope we need to press on.

Let us pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for these few minutes to study these few words. And we thank you for placing these words in the Bible.

We thank you that you don't command us to obey just so that you could watch us fail. But you command us to obey so that we might experience your Spirit supplying all the strength we need and walk in the Spirit.

Lord, I pray that no one would leave here without hope for change. Whatever the area is, whatever the thing is, we pray that you would supply hope for change.

[ 39 : 51 ] God, we thank you that grace comes to us where we are, but grace does not leave us there. I pray that you would give us a wonderful sense of the ways you have changed us to be more like Christ.

Things we could have never done, and yet you have done in our life. We thank you, God, that you began a good work in us. He's faithful. He'll bring it to completion.

The day of Christ Jesus. I give you praise. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

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