

## Philippians 2:12-13 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;*

<sup>13</sup> for it's God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

This is a great scripture and full of God's grace, yet people have turned it into a very legalistic one to scare Christians into action and to make them fear the loss of salvation if they don't sanctify themselves and live morally. They promote the idea that you must do good works to maintain your salvation, you must constantly be on your toes with fear



and trembling, so that you won't end up in hell. Another way of saying the same thing is the following: "Be sure to do enough good works in your life to divert God's attention from you and not send you to hell. But you will never be able to know if you are still in or out of salvation. So, add some genuine fear and trembling to ensure that you remain saved, because God will see your so-called reverence and spare you." This is a false interpretation.

The first thing to note here is that it doesn't say "work for your salvation," but "work out your salvation." That is a big difference! Many people have completely changed this verse to mean work for your salvation or work to keep your salvation. And you must do this with such fear and trembling because you just don't know when you might lose it and go to hell! However, the verse says to work out your salvation, not work for your salvation. It's simply teaching us how to walk in the Spirit, that it's God Who works in us, and we respond by working it out in our lives, by bringing it to light, trusting in God and not in our flesh.

Next, let's see from the immediate context and other places in the Bible what "fear and trembling" means. This is not a phrase meant to strike fear and insecurity in people's hearts. In the New Testament, whenever you see the phrase "fear and trembling," it's only

associated with good things! It's associated with awe and respect for God and a sense of submission to His greatness. It's a trust in God and a distrust in our flesh.

When Paul preached in Corinth, he said he did so with much fear and trembling, so his confidence wouldn't be in his preaching but in the power of God! (1 Corinthians 2:3) His fear and trembling were all about not having confidence in his flesh but putting his faith in God. Then in 2 Corinthians 7:15, Paul commends the Corinthians for welcoming Titus with fear and trembling. That meant joy, honor, and respect.

Furthermore, in Mark 5:33, the woman with the issue of blood also had fear and trembling, but it wasn't because Jesus had called her out and she was scared of the consequences of the fact that she was an unclean woman among Jewish men. Her fear and trembling were because she knew what had happened in her body and that she had been healed! It was amazement and awe at God's mighty working in her body!

Mark 5:33 (NKJV)

<sup>33</sup> But the woman, *fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her*, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.

People who say we must work for our salvation with fear and trembling seem to forget or leave out the following Verse 13 from Philippians 2, where it says, "for it's God Who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." Those who advocate for this wrong interpretation end up teaching the opposite of what this verse is trying to convey. They end up getting people in the flesh, making them to work for their salvation, when in fact, this verse is trying to teach us how to walk in the Spirit and respond to God's working in us so that it can be gloriously worked out through our lives! Notice that Verse 13 answers the question, "Why should we work out our salvation with fear and trembling?" If it were because of hell or God's punishment, it would have said so, but instead, it says to work out our salvation with awe and honor because God is the One doing it all, not us.

It's God Who works, and we then work it out, we manifest, what He has done inside us. God has put His goodness in us and we work it out through our lives. God has put His grace and

mercy in us and we work them out. God has put His victory and strength in us and we work them out. God has put His wisdom in us and we work it out.

God has established His Kingdom inside us and we work it out through our lives.

What a glorious picture of partnering with God! And the way we work it out is simply by believing and acknowledging every good thing He has put in us in Christ (Philemon 1:6).

In conclusion, I would like to paraphrase this scripture to show precisely how it is supposed to be read and understood: “Work out and exercise in, and through your lives, all the wonderful things God has already put in you, with joy, anticipation, excitement, and gratefulness.”

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