

## Must Keep Growing

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This past week, I heard a report on the radio talking about the damage that was done to children during the COVID event that started in 2020. Many children were not allowed to go to school and had to stare at a computer screen and do class by themselves. Many doctors have stated many children were affected mentally to the point where their mental growth was made to slow down. In other words, many children IQ levels are not at the levels they should be. Their minds were not allowed to grow in the proper manner because of the COVID restrictions. Parents also like to keep check to see if their children are growing physically as well. In the old sitcom from the early 60's, Car 54 Where Are You, there is one show that involves the police department cracking down on their requirements to be a police officer. One officer, Francis Muldoon (played by Fred Gwynne) gets upset because they don't want an officer over 6' 6" tall. Muldoon measures himself and finds he has grown an extra inch to 6' 7" since he has been in the police force. When Muldoon gets home, he tells his mother about the issue and she is all happy that her boy is still growing at the age of thirty. Parents want their children to grow. I hope I'm done growing. Most of the time, we like to see things grow. Farmers like to see their crops grow and to see their livestock grow. Usually, growth means being healthy. The same thing can be said about our spiritual growth as well. Many times, Christians will think they are good enough. They go to church once in a while and they tithe when they have a little extra money available. They may even pick up a Bible every once and awhile to remind them how good they are in being a Christian. However, spiritual growth is so important for a Christian no matter the age. After you reach the age of 30, you physically start to decay, but spiritually you can continue to grow till your body is done working. For a Christian, that should give us some excitement about our faith. Our body is going in one direction, our spiritual life can continue to grow stronger and stronger every day in the other direction. As we continue looking into the teachings of Paul for the Church, we've been spending time looking at the importance of praying for each other and how important it is for the church to be unified through the Holy Spirit. Paul also wanted the Church to continue to grow

spiritually because this would create a healthy Church and a united Church. Let's take a closer look into this. Let's turn to Philippians 2: 12 – 24 where we read this,

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

<sup>14</sup> Do everything without grumbling or arguing, <sup>15</sup> so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”<sup>(a)</sup> Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky <sup>16</sup> as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. <sup>17</sup> But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. <sup>18</sup> So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

<sup>19</sup> I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. <sup>20</sup> I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. <sup>21</sup> For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. <sup>23</sup> I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. <sup>24</sup> And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. (NIV – Biblegateway.com).

Paul starts off here telling the Church in Philippi that they must “continue to work out their salvation with fear and trembling”. The Greek term Paul uses for “work out” means to produce, accomplish, to bring out (Strong’s Concordance). The Greek term Paul uses for “salvation” means to rescue, deliverance, the state of not being in grave danger and so being safe (Strong’s Concordance). How Paul uses it here it means the state of believers being safe from righteous wrath in a proper relationship with God. In other words, salvation is a gift we receive when we allow Jesus into our hearts and minds and then our past sin is forgiven. Since our past sins are forgiven, we now can have a proper relationship with a Righteous God because of our faith in Jesus Christ who died on the cross so we could have a proper relationship with God. Our past sin no longer blocks our proper relationship with God. God supplied His own Son so we can enjoy salvation. King David is correct in many of his Psalms where he calls God “My God of my salvation”. This is a true statement. So, Paul is telling us that we must continue to

**“work out” produce or to bring out this gift of salvation. We just don’t receive this gift and put it on the shelf when needed like many do with the Bible. We are to continue to bring out this salvation that is within us. Plus, Paul adds in verse 13 that God wants to work within us or through our salvation so that we can know His will in our lives and to fulfill his good purpose for us. The Hebrews writer states the same thing in Hebrews 13: 20-21, where we read, “Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (NIV)” If we don’t continue to allow our faith / salvation to grow, God will not equip us and He won’t work in us. This is the danger of growing old. We stop working out our salvation because we think we are done or no use to anybody. That’s limiting God. We continue to study His Word through church activities and on our own. We continue to pray and just as important, we continue to do the work of Jesus. When we continue to do these things, we are allowing God to do His work. God doesn’t want to work through someone who doesn’t have the heart or desire to work out their salvation. Someone who doesn’t want to continue to work out their salvation no longer has a healthy love for Jesus and for people as well. This is why it is so important for us to continue to work out our salvation until we die.**

**Maybe this is why Paul added in verse 12, “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling”. The Greek term of “trembling” means trembling. The Greek term for “fear” is a deep word. It means fear with respect and reverence (Strong’s Concordance). Paul wanted the Church to work out their salvation because they should have a healthy fear which leads to respect and reverence to a God that would send His only Son to die on a cross for OUR sin. We continue to work out our salvation until we die out of respect and reverence to our God – the God of our salvation. What’s great about this is all we need to do is ask the Lord to help us with this and His Spirit that dwells within us will help us to work out our salvation until we are called home to Heaven.**

**Paul gives us the reason we should want to do this in verse 14 and 15 where Paul states, “Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.’ Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky. (NIV)”**

We work out our salvation by allowing the Lord to work within us so that we can know His Will and He wants to fulfill His good purpose in you (verse 13). Part of that good purpose is for us to become blameless and pure. This is the goal of working out our salvation. It takes a lifetime to get to this point because our age changes, our culture changes and keeps throwing new sinful ideas at us, and we need to keep on our toes so we can remain blameless and pure. This is possible if we allow the Lord to do His thing within us through His Spirit. In other words, we allow His Spirit to have control over our human nature so we can be blameless and pure. God only wants the best for us. He knows what we have to go through on this old sinful world, but He wants us to still shine bright like the stars we see at night. Paul talks about being poured out in verses 16 through 18 for the Church. Paul shined bright up to the day he was beheaded for his faith in God. Why do we focus so much on our pain and misery to the point where it blocks out the Lord? This blocking keeps the Lord from working within us to fulfill His purpose in us. I use them as an example all the time, but they serve up such a good example – the Ten Boom sisters. Even though they suffered greatly in a German Concentration Camp during WWII, they continued to reach out to the lost for Jesus and served the people around them. Bestie would do this till she died in that camp. However, if you have read the story, she allowed God to work in her and she worked out her salvation until the end faithfully and by the fruit she produced, I believe she was blameless and pure on that death bed because of her respect and the reverence fear she had for her Lord. If only we could be as faithful to Jesus. Is that too much to ask for Someone who went to the cross for us?

We have to understand something here. If we say this hard for us to do or we really don't care about working out our salvation, it proves we lack something. Paul states this in verses 19 – 22, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. (NIV)" Timothy is the example of someone who has worked out their salvation and has allowed the Lord to fulfill His purpose in their life. If you read the letters Paul wrote to Timothy, he had a tough job as a pastor. Timothy was able to live out this blameless and pure life because he had an

important ingredient that was part of his salvation. Paul had no one else like Timothy and that was because Timothy had genuine concern for the welfare of the church. The KJV uses the terms “naturally care” instead of “genuine concern”. Paul stated most people look out for their own interests and how true that statement is for today. Timothy had worked out his salvation and by allowing the Lord to work within him freely, he was able to have genuine concern for the welfare of people. Timothy did the work of the gospel because he had “genuine” concern for people. We can call this “genuine concern” for people or “compassion”. The Church in America lacks what Timothy had – genuine concern/compassion for people. Timothy was only living out Jesus – the same thing we should be doing. King David tells us this in Psalm 25: 6, “Remember, O Lord, your unfailing love and compassion, which you have shown from ages past. Forgive the rebellious sins of my youth; look instead through the eyes of your unfailing love, for you are merciful, O Lord. (NLT, 846)” God is the Author of compassion because that is part of His character – He has always been and always will be and compassion is God. Jesus is God and we read this from Matthew 14: 13 – 14, “As soon as Jesus heard the news (about John the Baptist), he went off by himself in a boat to a remote area to be alone. But the crowd heard where he was headed and followed by land from many villages. A vast crowd was there as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick (NLT, 1436)” Jesus had compassion on the crowd because He is God. Paul then makes this statement in Philippians 1: 8, “God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Jesus Christ. (NLT, 1887)”. Paul had compassion / genuine concern on the Church only because the compassion of Jesus flowed through him. When we pull out the dip stick on the level of the working of our salvation, if our compassion for people is low or not genuine, then we know we are not working out our salvation and we have not allowed God to fulfill His purpose in our lives. It’s not too late. It doesn’t matter what your age is. God wants you to have genuine compassion for people. When this happens, then you will shine among the people like the stars in the sky.

*The Strongest Strong’s Concordance.* Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001

*NLT Life Application Study Bible.* Tyndale House Publishers, Inc: Wheaton, 1996