

"WORK IT OUT"
Philippians 2:12-18

The older I get, and now that I am fifty-something, it becomes even more crucial that I take time to run and work out as it becomes increasingly more and more difficult to stay in shape. Paying attention to what I eat is also in the mix. Chalk it up to old age. I was doing some research the other day and found out that 87% of Americans own running shoes but don't run.

(Charis Conn, Ed., [What Counts: The Complete Harper's Index.](#))

Interesting.... Maybe it is the fashion statement those running shoes represent, I don't know. You know, I wish I had a penny for every commercial I have ever seen on TV advertizing weight loss pills, or new fan dangled exercise equipment to get this or that part of the body in shape, or the newest diet fad or diet food that is guaranteed to help you lose two dress sizes- I'd be a millionaire. For years getting in shape has taken this country by storm and yet it is easy to understand when you read some of the statistics.

On Thursday, July 9th, I turned on the Channel 3 early news at 5:45 a.m. and they were talking about Americans and obesity and overweight and that 2/3 of us fall into this category. Then, the July 2, 2009 edition of the *Chicago Tribune* reported that one in three Illinois children are overweight or obese, according to a new report that puts the state on an unenviable Top 10 list.

Since the mid-seventies, the prevalence of overweight and obesity has increased sharply for both adults and children. Data from two National Health And Nutrition Examination Surveys show that among adults aged 20–74 years the prevalence of obesity increased from 15.0% (in the 1976–1980 survey) to 32.9% (in the 2003–2004 survey). So there is a huge market and business out there to encourage people to lose weight and stay in shape. The call for Americans to not be sedentary but to “Work Out” has justification.

Why, there is even a call for Christians to "Work Out," but in this case it is not the physical but rather the spiritual- "Work Out Your Own Salvation."

In our study thus far of Philippians we have learned how the Apostle Paul has been appealing to the Christians in Philippi to live in unity in any given situation. He implores them to be a brave, united witness to Christ even at the cost of struggle and suffering. Now Paul is challenging the congregation in Philippi to work out, fulfill, actualize their salvation.

Paul wants them to understand that the Christian life not only involves the "mind"; it is a diligent effort as well- it takes work. Unity is crucial for the church at Philippi but there is something more. There is the need to live a life that will, are you ready, there is a need to live a life that will lead to the salvation of God in time and in eternity. And this will take exercise, spiritual exercise and our passage has a few helpful hints on how we can get in spiritual shape.

Before we get down and dirty and Work It Out, let me explain a few things about a couple of words. First, the words "work out." The Greek word for "work out" has the idea of bringing to completion. You see, Paul doesn't want the believers in Philippi or any believer, for that matter, to do anything half baked. He doesn't want us to stop halfway but to go forward until the work of salvation is fully created in you, in me. Paul wants to make sure that there is no Christian who is satisfied with anything less than the total benefits of the gospel.

Next, the word "salvation." The word "salvation" comes from the Latin root word for "salve," and "salve" is an ointment for healing. **For one to be saved is to be made whole.** The Greek word for salvation is *soteria* which means not only salvation but preservation. Folks, there is a point when we first make a commitment to Christ and we know we are saved- that is where we acknowledge that we are sinful, where we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to save us from our sins, and where we commit our

lives to Christ. But that is only the beginning. Paul wants to make sure that we work out, that we bring to completion our healing where we are made whole and preserved; where we are growing into maturity, into the full stature of Christ.

But what is the work of salvation all about? What does it entail? First, **Salvation is of God**. It is important to stop right here and say what Paul is not, let me repeat, what Paul is not saying. Paul is not saying that we are to work for our salvation as if your good deeds and my good deeds will save you and me. Look back and see what Paul says over in Ephesians 2:8-9. He says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast." Paul never tells us that we should be out there working for, earning our salvation. Why? Because it just cannot be done. Neither you nor I could ever do enough good works, good deeds to secure our salvation. And that is why he employs us to work out our salvation. So what is the

difference between working for our salvation and working out our salvation?

Well, faith without works is dead- so it says in James 2:26. And so a person cannot have a real faith if it is not a working faith. And to bring it home to today's message if you and I are not exercising our faith, if we are not

"Working It Out" then our faith, quite frankly, is a dead faith.

Let's come back to this first point that Salvation is of God. Friends, it is God that works in us the wanting, the desiring to be saved. Yes, it is true that, "our hearts are restless till they rest in him," and it is true that, "we could not even begin to seek him unless he had already found us." But the point is that the desire for the salvation of God is not born in any emotion that you or I might have, but rather it is found in God Himself. The beginning of the process of salvation is stirred first, in God Himself. And the continuation of the process of salvation is dependent on God. For without God's help there can be no desire for goodness and without God's help there is not a single sin that can be conquered. And the end of the process of

salvation is with God, for its end is a relationship with God, where we are God's and God is ours. So the entire journey, the entire work of salvation begins, continues and ends with God.

And yet there is another side to this salvation. The second point is that **Salvation is of humans**. We, you and I, have to put some "skin" in the game. That is why Paul says, "Work out your own salvation." Paul doesn't suggest it, Paul doesn't encourage it, rather Paul demands it. For without our cooperation with God, even God Almighty is helpless. Friends any gift that you would present to me today- a \$100 bill, a dinner out to the fanciest restaurant in town, why, a new car has to find me accepting that gift, I have to receive that gift. I have to stretch out my hands and take it to myself.

Folks, I can walk you across the street to City Hospital and take you up and down the halls of that hospital and into any room and when the

nurse comes around with meds, the patient lying in the bed can take that little container with the pills, the medicine or refuse it.

And we can bring in the doctor who can look that patient in the eyes and tell him or her that unless they take their medication they will not get better so that they can leave the hospital, but unless that patient takes the meds, they are going to get progressively worse and, and, The same is true of our salvation. God offers you and me salvation- it is a free gift that was bought with a price by the only Son of God who suffered and died on a criminal's cross over 2,000 years ago and that same Son of God rose victorious 3 days latter granting all who believe eternal life. But folks, not a one of us can receive salvation unless we say YES to God's gift of Jesus Christ and take the salvation that God offers.

The bottom line is this- there can be absolutely no salvation without God, and yet what God offers we must take. God never, ever withholds His

salvation from anyone; it is always, always this person here and that person there who deprives him or herself from it.

And that is precisely why Paul says in verse 12 of our passage for us to “work out your own salvation.” And this kind of “work” is manifested through perspiration, calluses, sore back and bone weariness. It is not for the faint-hearted.

Just read the New Testament and see how Paul went about working out his salvation with intense labor as an offering to God. And we should be as well. The question is, are we? Are we working out our salvation? Are we exercising our spiritual muscles and if so, how? Are we working out our salvation and if so how?

Here is a question I have heard posed many times that we all need to consider- **If we were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict us?**

I heard someone once say, we are pardoned from sin, but we are not excused from service. And consider this- if we are not working out our salvation, now get ready for this, if we are not working out our salvation could it be we have no salvation? Something to ponder.... Friends, what we are talking about is a matter of life and death. So I ask us again, are we working out our salvation? For when we exercise our faith, when we let God work in and through us, it can and it will have unbelievable life-changing results. How is our physical exercise going? And how is our spiritual health these days? Friends, let's all get going and "Work It Out" and do so in His strength. Amen? Amen.

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Introduction: The older I get... it becomes even more crucial that I take time to run and work out...

Fact: 87% of Americans own running shoes but...

Fact: 2/3 of Americans are obese and overweight

Paul writing to the Philippians

Live in unity

Work out, fulfill, actualize your salvation

"Work Out"-

"Salvation"-

For one to be saved is to be made _____

What is the work of salvation all about? What does it entail?

First, **Salvation is from _____**

Eph. 2:8-9

What is the difference between working *for* our salvation and working *out* our salvation?

Second, **the Salvation is of _____**

Bottom line- there can be absolutely no salvation without God, and yet what God offers we must take

A question- **if we were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict us?**

Conclusion: How is our physical exercise going? How is our spiritual health these days? Let's all get going and "Work It Out" and do so in His strength.