

APPROACHING
GOD'S WORD

Copyright 1985,1993,2001,2007
Crossroads Full Gospel
International Ministries

All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical, photocopied, recorded or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher. Short extracts may be used for review purposes.

Except otherwise stated, Bible quotes come from the King James Version. 1611 Elizabethan English is updated in some cases to reflect present terminology, without changing the true meaning of the word.

Extracts from "The Expositor's Study Bible" are identified as E.S.B. Copyright © 2005 Published by, and the sole property of, Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, Baton Rouge, LA, and extracts from the Swaggart Bible Commentary series are identified as S.B.C. Copyright © World Evangelism Press®

Extracts from the Amplified Bible are identified as Amp. Old Testament Copyright © 1962, 1964 by Zondervan Corporation. New Testament Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation.

Extracts from the New International Version are identified as N.I.V. Copyright 1973,1978,1984 by The International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

Also used: The New Testament: An Expanded Translation (Wuest) translated by Kenneth S. Wuest. Copyright © 1961 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

Published by:

*Crossroads Publications
10681 Princes Highway
Warrnambool
Victoria 3280
Australia*

CONTENTS

APPROACHING GOD’S WORD.....	1
UNDERSTANDING GOD’S WORD.....	6
THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDITATING ON GOD’S WORD.....	9
THE RESULTS OF STAGNATION.....	11
KNOWLEDGE ALONE IS USELESS.....	17
LIGHT EXPOSES DARKNESS.....	20

APPROACHING GOD'S WORD

Background Reading: Matthew 7:7-11

God's Word has the answer to every problem we will ever face, for it leads us into all truth. Indeed He is sufficient in every situation. But we need to seek Him and His Word with a sincere and honest heart, really desiring to know the truth. We also need to rid ourselves of our biased attitudes and preconceived ideas in order to clearly understand what God is saying.

Firstly we need to separate ourselves, through true repentance, from all sin - for we are a holy people unto God, set aside for His use and His purposes. As we seek His Word diligently, His truths will be revealed to us and written on our hearts. Then as we act on it, the implanted word will produce the salvation of our souls (minds) at a conditional level.

JAMES 1:21 Wherefore (Christians) lay apart all filthiness (refers to moral impurity: E.S.B.) and superfluity of naughtiness (increased evil to which moral impurity will lead . . . : E.S.B.), and receive with meekness (seek, find and embrace) the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls (minds: Romans 12:2).

Some people would say, however, "I thought my soul was already saved." This is where we need to take note of the context in which the scripture was written. First of all, the Book of James was written to Christians and so this scripture is not referring to the salvation of the spirit. When people are regenerated (born again), their spirits are saved. The soul (mind), however, is not saved (conditionally) at this point and that is why God commands us to renew our minds (Romans 12:2). Our souls (minds) are saved (renewed) by receiving God's Word into our hearts and acting upon it in faith. In this way we begin to think as God thinks, and to harmonize the desires of our soul and spirit.

Yes - positionally we are saved, but our condition does not always match our position. Ongoing daily sanctification is needed in order for our condition on an experiential level to match our position of righteousness. This takes place as we renew our minds and act on

that renewal. The grace of God is needed to bring such righteous fruit into existence at an experiential level on a daily basis. How do we receive this grace needed for the daily journey of faith? First we must take up our cross, and yield to the Holy Spirit Who then energizes our human nature with the energies of His Divine Nature. The empowerment of the Divine Nature will give us that which we need to run the race strong, and complete life's most important journey.

“. . .Ongoing daily sanctification is needed in order for our condition on an experiential level to match our position of righteousness. . .”

The **only way** we can allow the Spirit of God to implant His Word in our hearts is by us submitting to it with all meekness. Then we need to keep it alive in our hearts by continually watering it through meditating and acting upon it. James goes on to say:

JAMES 1:22 . . . be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

JAMES 1:23 For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer (one who listens to the Word but does not obey it), he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass (mirror):

JAMES 1:24 For he behold himself, and goes his way (which is not God's way), and straightway forgets what manner of man he was. (An evaluation of ourselves is necessary. However, it is God Alone Who knows the heart which the Word of God, properly presented, reveals.) (E.S.B.)

Therefore we should not only study the Word of God, we must remember to do what it says. For instance, we need to be yielding to the Holy Spirit, believing the old man to be dead, and also reckoning

that we have been raised with Christ in newness of life, making us partakers of the Divine Nature.

The Divine Nature gives us both the desire and the power to do God's will, through us yielding to the Holy Spirit. How is this possible? Our will is the trigger that gives permission for the Lord's grace to work through us as we yield to Him. We are then given holy desire and empowerment through the Divine Nature to live in the will of God. This is how our character can be changed and spiritual maturity developed in our lives. We need to take the Word of God and act on it with commitment and a holy desire, once again this being birthed in God's grace as we yield to Him and flow with Him.

To use a natural example, if someone asked us how many freckles we had on our face, most of us would say, "I don't know." We would probably have looked in the mirror this morning but we would not have purposed to count how many freckles we had. To know how many freckles we have we would need to deliberately count them.

We need to approach God's Word with this kind of intensity. We need to purpose in our hearts to really look into it, desiring to be able to believe and reckon it to our account. If we approach God with this attitude, He gives us a promise:

JAMES 1:25 But whoso looks into the perfect Law of Liberty (defines the whole body of revealed truth concerning the Word of God), and continues therein (there must be a continuous abiding in the Word), he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. (Obeying the Word of God brings great Blessing . . .) (E.S.B.)

We cannot afford to merely browse through the Word to see what God has for us today. Neither can we afford to pick and choose, saying, "I won't have any of that, but I'll have some of this." God does not work this way. We need to be open to receive all He has for us by purposing in our hearts to live in "*the fear of the Lord*" which, the scriptures tell us, is "*the beginning of wisdom*" (Proverbs 9:10).

We can define "*the fear of the Lord*" as "reverencing God unto obedience" and this means of course "reverencing God's Word of truth unto obedience." Remember that the Word tells us that to love

God is to keep His commands (John 14:21; 1 John 5:3). So the proof of our love for God will be whether we obey what He says.

“. . .Our will is the trigger that gives permission for the Lord’s grace to work through us as we yield to Him. . .”

If we have the will, He has the power. He wants to give to us, but only through the Divine Nature can our character be developed to become more Christlike. Yes, so that we can love instead of hate, so that we won’t respond to persecution with anger or to weakness with intolerance. We can be changed and become a different person - but only as we yield every area of our life to the Holy Spirit and lay down our life in His service.

Reverencing God’s Word of truth unto obedience produces victory and so salvation, first of spirit, then soul and body. Indeed the Word of God is life to all those who seek it and act upon it with a diligent and sincere heart.

PROVERBS 4:20 My son, attend to my words (this equates to the Word of God); incline your ear unto my sayings.

PROVERBS 4:21 Let them not depart from your eyes (read the Word daily); keep them in the midst of your heart (digest the Word so that it becomes a part of you).

PROVERBS 4:22 For they are life unto those who find them, and health to all their flesh (what God says is life and health).

So when we look into the Word of God, we need to come with the attitude of wanting to know everything we can, spoonful by spoonful, precept upon precept, knowledge added to knowledge.

Christians do not have a sin problem so much as a yielding problem, a receiving problem - for Christ rose from the dead and defeated Satan, sin and the sin nature. The biggest problem in a

Christian's life is usually the reflection he sees in the mirror. We are delivered from hell at salvation. But we also need to be delivered from self - self-interest, self-promotion, self-desire etc. etc., and this is the focus and work of ongoing sanctification.

“ . . . We can be changed and become a different person - but only as we yield every area of our life to the Holy Spirit and lay down our life in His service. . . ”

It is impossible to know all that God knows and we will never know it all. But God promises that He will give us what we need when it is needed, as we fulfill the conditions and journey with Him. Whatever is needed God will provide. For example, if you ask the Father for bread, will He give you a stone? Of course not. God will give you bread, if that is what is needed. However, when you come to God to ask Him for the bread, you must believe and trust that He will give it to you because He said He would (Matthew 7:7-11). This is because faith is heaven's currency (Hebrews 11:6).

Initially, in a Christian's early faith-walk, God's hand of grace seems at times, in certain areas, abundantly available to assist them. If they trust, God will do for them what they are not yet able to do for themselves. Then as we grow, God expects more from us. This is why scripture tells us that “ . . . unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required . . . ” (Luke 12:48).

As a child grows and matures, more is required and expected of that child. Similarly, the longer we are Christians, the more God requires of us - for He wants us to eventually walk by faith in every area of our lives and be vessels fit for our Master's use (2 Timothy 2:20-21).

It should be our desire as Christians to serve God by knowing His will through first studying His Word. Remember that it took the Blood of Jesus to prove this Word to us. Therefore we should not leave it on the book shelf. Instead, let us reverence the Word of God, and move forward without any hesitation to seek the Lord's will and to serve Him so as to be living witnesses of His love throughout the

earth. This will happen as we have ongoing fellowship with our Heavenly Father and believe and reckon to our account that which is written in God's Word of deliverance, protection and provision.

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

Background Reading: Ephesians 1:17-18

Do not be disappointed when studying God's Word if you cannot, at first, fully understand all that you study. In fact your spirit needs to be educated and trained in spiritual matters, just as your body has been trained in physical skills - and this takes time.

Also just because a person reads the Word of God does not necessarily mean that his or her spirit will become educated. Understanding is required before this process can take place. A person could sit down and read a great deal of scientific material, for instance, but it would not necessarily mean that this person would understand what he or she was reading.

You too can read the Bible and not understand what you are reading. This is one reason the Lord has provided the Church with Teachers (Ephesians 4:11-12), so that His people can gain a clear understanding of the whole Word of God.

Also, spiritual matters cannot be fully understood from our natural reasoning alone (unrenewed mind), for God's Word is spiritually understood as revelation knowledge by the heart (spirit) of a man.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:14 *But the natural man (natural thinking man) receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (understood).*

ISAIAH 28:10 *For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little*

This is why we need to continually meditate on God's Word, to give the Holy Spirit (our true Teacher) the opportunity to reveal His

truths to us, little by little. In this way we can grow in knowledge, faith and wisdom.

“ . . .Spiritual matters cannot be fully understood from our natural reasoning alone (unrenewed mind), for God’s Word is spiritually understood as revelation knowledge by the heart (spirit) of a man. . .”

We have taken from Dake’s Annotated Bible the following reference entitled as follows:

“TWENTY PROOFS THE BIBLE IS INSPIRED:

1. *Its wonderful unity.* Over 40 authors wrote 66 books in different lands and over a period of 1800 years.

Many never saw the writings of the others and yet there is no contradiction between any two of them. Collect any group of books by any other 40 men on any subject and see if they agree.

2. *Its superiority to other books* in its origin, formation, doctrines, principles, claims, moral tone, histories, prophecies, revelation, literature, present redemption and eternal benefits, and its general contents.

3. *Its influence in the world.* It has blessed millions in every generation, made the highest civilizations, and given man the highest hope and destiny.

4. *The character and greatness of those who accept it.* The wisest, most godly, and honest of men acknowledge it as God’s Word. Only infidels and the ungodly reject it.

5. *Man could not have written it if he would, and would not have written it if he could.* No critic of Scripture has ever been able to improve or disprove it.

6. *Good men must have written it.* It condemns all sin and records the sins and faults of its writers as well as others. This, evil men would not do. Even good men would not do it unless inspired to do so to help others.

7. All man's present and eternal needs are met by the Bible. Redemption and promised benefits have been given to all who believed in all generations and this will always be so.

8. Its preservation through the ages. Whole kingdoms and religions have sought in vain to destroy it. It is still victor and indestructible.

9. The heavenly and eternal character of its contents proves it to be of God.

10. The response of the soul to it. The Bible fits the soul as a key to a lock.

11. Its infinite depths and lofty ideals. It is universal in its appeal, reasonable in its teachings, reliable in its promises, durable in its conflicts, everlasting in its usefulness, new and modern in its statements, indispensable to human civilization, indisputable in its authority, interesting in its histories, colorful in its biographies, accurate in its prophecies, individual in its messages, far reaching in its vision, complete in its laws, comprehensive in its knowledge, infinite in its detail, unselfish in its purpose, simple in its application, just in its demands, righteous in its judgements, clear in its application, and masterful in its wisdom.

12. Fulfilled prophecy. About 3,300 verses of prophecy have been fulfilled, predictions made hundreds and even thousands of years before their fulfillment. Not one detail has failed yet. About 2,908 verses are being fulfilled, or will yet be fulfilled.

13. Miracles. Hundreds are recorded in Scripture, and many happen daily among those who pray and claim Bible promises.

14. Its perfection. It is scientifically and historically correct. No one man has ever found the Bible at fault in any of its many hundreds of statements on history, astronomy, botany, geology, or any other branch of learning.

15. Its adaptability. It is always up to date on any subject. It fits the lives of all people of all ages and all lands.

16. Its spiritual and moral power. It meets perfectly every spiritual and moral need of man.

17. Its doctrines. They surpass all human principles in relationship, religion, culture, etc. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

18. Claims of the Bible itself. Over 3,800 times Bible writers claim God spoke what they wrote. The Bible itself claims to be the Word of God.

19. Secular history. Many pagan as well as Jewish and Christian writers confirm the facts of the Bible, quoting it as being genuine, authentic, and inspired of God.

20. Its inexhaustible proofs. It would take many volumes to deal fully with the many thousands of facts which confirm the Bible to be the Word of God. The book must be divine. If one will use it properly it will confirm itself to him as the inspired Word of God.”¹

“ . . .Over 40 authors wrote 66 books in different lands and over a period of 1800 years. Many never saw the writings of the others and yet there is no contradiction between any two of them. . . ”

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDITATING ON GOD’S WORD

Background Reading: Psalm 1:1-3

Studying and meditating on the Word of God are both vital to a person’s growth in the Lord. We must first study the Word in order to gain an understanding of God’s promises and righteous standards. Then as we meditate upon the Word, and accept it wholeheartedly, it will be deposited into our hearts as revelation (heart) knowledge - as of course we open up to the Holy Spirit. (And we meditate upon God’s Word by considering it thoughtfully or thinking deeply upon it.)

We need to read and meditate on the Word of God daily in order to know and keep God’s principles alive and active within our minds and hearts. This needs to be a continual process, as the Book of Joshua tells us:

JOSHUA 1:8 This Book of the Law (God’s Word) shall not depart out of your mouth (speak about the Word all the time); but you shall meditate therein day and night (think about the Word all the time), that you may observe (be watchful) to do (act) according to all that is written therein: (and this is the promise) for then you shall make

your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success.

Then when a particular situation or trial arises, we will know how the Lord wants us to deal with it - according to the logos Word. The test will be whether we apply the Word we have learned to that situation or circumstance which has presented itself, trusting also in Christ's finished work at Calvary, with us in Him partaking of the Divine Nature in "newness of life." Our reliance must always be on the Lord, for He tells us in His Word, "without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5), nothing, that is, of any eternal value. Only by His grace at work in our lives can real change be made, and character developed. Then the glory for any good thing goes to Him, "the Author and Finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

“. . . The test will be whether we apply the Word we have learned to that situation or circumstance which has presented itself. . . ”

If we lack the spiritual fruits of love, joy, peace, strength, etc., in any area of our lives, we need to seek so that we may find and embrace His truths, for this means we are lacking that which is rightfully ours. We can know this because God's Word says that we have spiritual prosperity, love, joy, peace, inner strength, etc. Indeed all our needs are met in Christ Jesus as we meet the conditions set out in His Word, and rely on His grace.

PHILIPPIANS 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

To bring us to this position of reliance, however, we need to be fellowshiping with God and studying His Word, seeking the face of the Creator to do His will rather than His hands to obtain a blessing. In this we will be learning of Him and His ways and also discovering that all our needs are met in Christ. Throughout the Word there are promises which say we are healed, we have prosperity, we have peace and the power of God, through Jesus Christ, to meet the need.

However, if we do not take the time to discover that these promises exist and then to embrace them for ourselves, they will not become a reality in our lives.

Just mentally acknowledging that the promises of God are real is only the first step. We then need to seek out the conditions and fulfill them in order for the promises to be manifested in our lives. Indeed, we may be thinking or acting wrongly in some areas, and not be aware of it. In either case, we will be preventing God from blessing us. Studying God's Word, however, and fellowshiping with Him will help us discover, with the help of the Holy Spirit, areas in our lives which need to be changed. Through these means, the Lord is able to speak to us, and reveal Himself to us. Then by His grace and the power of His Spirit, as we seek the Lord's will, we can be changed.

However, as we have said, let us not just seek the Word in regard to the promises of the Covenant. Let us seek fellowship with the Giver of the Covenant Himself, so that we may draw water from the deep wells of our salvation.

THE RESULTS OF STAGNATION

Background Reading: Mark 4:3-19

Due to the Fall of man, there seems to have been a genetic deterioration which has affected not only man's physical body, but also, to some extent, man's memory (his ability to recall information).

There is a saying which states, "What you don't use you will lose." When we were at school, for example, we learned the various maths formulas of the day. However because most of us would not have applied them in our daily lives, we will have forgotten them simply through a lack of usage.

The same applies to the Word of God. We need to continually meditate on it and observe to do what it says, in the Lord's strength not ours, so that we will not lose what we have learned.

If we are not observing to do all, then we will, at some point, lose ground and slip backwards in our faith-walk. And "observing to do all" simply means that on a day to day basis, we are going to do all the Lord has told us to do, which is really goaling to allow the

Holy Spirit to lead us and empower us. We need, in fact, to journey daily with the Holy Spirit, relying on His graces to grow in character into the likeness of Christ. Amen.

“. . . We need, in fact, to journey daily with the Holy Spirit, relying on His graces to grow in character into the likeness of Christ. . . ”

In extreme cases, if people become stagnant and do not move on in God, life's current will eventually push them onto the rocks and their ship will either rot or be broken, depending on the life they have led.

Because the enemy is always waiting for us to relax a little in regard to our faith so that he can attack us, we simply cannot afford to become complacent or lazy in our commitment to the Lord (1 Peter 5:8). There is an old saying which may have some merit - "If you are in the same position today as you were yesterday, then you are a backslider." This means that our spiritual growth needs to be ongoing and progressive - so we should always be stretching ahead towards victory in Christ. Therefore:

HEBREWS 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight (all that hinders), and the sin which does so easily beset (entangles) us, and let us run with patience (perseverance) the race that is set before us (the only "weight" God will allow in the running of this race is our taking up and bearing the Cross, and doing so constantly [Luke 9:23-24]: E.S.B.)

And as Paul encourages his readers to strive spiritually, with holy ambition:

PHILIPPIANS 3:13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended (attained complete Christlikeness): but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which

are behind, reaching forth unto those things which are before (God's will on a daily basis),

PHILIPPIANS 3:14 I press toward the mark (the holy standard by which we must live) for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (God's will for one's life which is to be an imitator of Christ).

It is sound advice never to follow a parked vehicle because a parked vehicle is going nowhere. The same could be said in regard to a “parked pastor” or a “parked church.” We need to be able to spiritually swim in the river of truth so we can progress towards the goal that God has set before us. It is very hard, however, to swim in only a few inches of water. Therefore we need to wade out into the deeper waters of truth with the help of a God-fearing, Holy-Spirit-led pastor and church that are moving forward in God's will. A point to remember in all this is that we must not rely on our own strength to swim in this river. Rather we must believe for God to strengthen us and give us the ability to do so. This is only possible as we become humble and submit ourselves to the mighty hand of God. Then He can lift us up and empower us to do His will (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6; Philippians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:4).

“. . . We need to wade out into the deeper waters of truth with the help of a God-fearing, Holy-Spirit-led pastor and church that are moving forward in God's will. . . ”

If people stagnate in their Christian walk, the devil and his agents will not give them priority, for such Christians can do him very little harm. The enemy will concentrate his efforts on those who are doing damage to his Kingdom. You see with little effort the enemy will be able to take the Word out of the hearts of stagnant Christians, and whatever heart-knowledge they had will be reduced to mere intellectual knowledge (Mark 4:25). He will then simply be able to attack and destroy them at his leisure, whether directly or indirectly - for it is Satan's nature to kill, steal and destroy (John

10:10). And because such people are not renewing their minds, and are not taking ground by gaining empowerment through the Divine Nature, the enemy's task is made easy.

However if Christians move on in Christ, they become more of a target for the enemy and should prepare themselves for his attacks. Indeed the Word of God tells us that if we live a Godly life in Christ, we will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12). This persecution can come in the form of words spoken against us, even by members of our own family (Luke 12:51-53). We should always remember, however, that we do not fight, in a spiritual sense, against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12), but against spiritual forces of wickedness, and that God is bigger, stronger and mightier than Satan and all his plans. As we walk by faith in God's Word, yielding to the Holy Spirit, no weapon of the enemy will prosper against us (Isaiah 54:17). We will then be living under God's canopy of protection with Jesus fighting the enemy on our behalf (as we allow Him to do so).

Paul says in Philippians 2:12-13:

PHILIPPIANS 2:12 *Wherefore, 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 (growing towards maturity in Christ) with fear and trembling (this involves the process of ongoing sanctification).*

PHILIPPIANS 2:13 *For it is God Who works in you (through Divine enablement) both to will and to do of His good pleasure (to not only desire God's will but also to do it).*

Wuest comments on these verses as follows:

“ “Wherefore,” goes back to 1:27 where Paul's presence and absence are referred to as in this verse. In 1:27 we have Paul's exhortation to the Philippian saints to conduct themselves as citizens of heaven should. Then the apostle singles out one of the obligations of a citizen of heaven, that of living in harmony and unity with his fellow-saints. In 2:1-4, he gives four reasons which in themselves are enablements, why they should live in unity together, and further

develops the theme of Christian unity. In 2:5, he tells them that such unity is one of the constituent elements in the mind of Christ, and in 2:6-8, he shows how Christ Jesus exhibited the basic quality of unity, namely, humility and self-abnegation in His incarnation and vicarious death on the Cross, which act on His part was recognized by God the Father in that He exalted His Son as the Man Christ Jesus, placing Him in the place of highest honor in the universe.

Now, in 2:12, 13, the apostle exhorts these saints to make the humility and self-abnegation exhibited by the Lord Jesus, a fact in their own lives. He calls them, “my beloved ones,” the word being plural in the Greek. The distinctive word here for “love” refers to the love that God is, to the love produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit, a love that impels one to sacrifice one’s self for the benefit of others. This is the heavenly love with which the great apostle loved the Philippians. He commends them for their constant obedience. Then he exhorts them to work out their own salvation. Let us be clear first of all as to what this exhortation does not mean. It does not mean to work for one’s salvation, and for two reasons; first, Paul was writing to those who were already saved, and second, salvation is not a work of man for God, but a work of God for man, a work that was accomplished at the Cross. Neither does it mean to work out an inworked salvation. The idea of working out an inworked salvation is merely a play upon the English words “work out,” and has no support from the Greek.

“. . .The Philippians are exhorted to carry their salvation to its ultimate conclusion, namely, Christlikeness - victory over sin and the living of a life pleasing to the Lord Jesus. . .”

The words “work out” are the translation of a Greek word which means “to carry out to the goal, to carry to its ultimate conclusion.” We say, “The student worked out a problem in arithmetic.” That is, he carried the problem to its ultimate conclusion. This is the way it is used here. The Philippians are exhorted to carry their salvation to its ultimate conclusion, namely, Christlikeness. The salvation spoken of here is not justification, but sanctification, victory over sin and the

living of a life pleasing to the Lord Jesus. They are to see to it that they make progress in their Christian lives. They are to do this with fear and trembling. This is not a slavish terror, but a wholesome caution. "This fear is self-distrust; it is tenderness of conscience; it is vigilance against temptation; it is the fear which inspiration opposes to high-mindedness in the admonition, 'be not high-minded but fear.' It is taking heed lest we fall; it is a constant apprehension of the deceitfulness of the heart, and of the insidiousness and power of inward corruption. It is the caution and circumspection which timidly shrinks from whatever would offend and dishonor God and the Saviour" (Vincent, quoting Wardlaw On Proverbs). This is human responsibility.

In verse thirteen we have divine enablement. The saints are to carry their salvation which God has given them and which thus belongs to them, to its ultimate goal, always remembering and depending upon the fact that it is God who is working in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure. The word "worketh" in the Greek means "to energize, to work effectively." Our words "energy" and "energize" come from it. The words "to will" are the translation of a Greek word meaning "to desire," and refer to a desire that comes from one's emotions rather than from one's reason. It is this desire to do the good pleasure of God that is produced by divine energy in the heart of the saint as he definitely subjects himself to the Holy Spirit's ministry. It is God the Holy Spirit who energizes the saint, making him not only willing, but actively desirous of doing God's sweet will. But He does not merely leave the saint with the desire to do His will. He provides the necessary power to do it. This we have in the words "to do." The Greek construction implies habit, the habitual doing of God's will.

In verse twelve, we have human responsibility. In verse thirteen, divine enablement, a perfect balance which must be kept if the Christian life is to be lived at its best. It is not a "let go and let God" affair. It is a "take hold with God" business. It is a mutual co-operation with the Holy Spirit in an interest and an activity in the things of God. The saint must not merely rest in the Holy Spirit for victory over sin and the production of a holy life. He must in addition to this dependence upon the Spirit, say a positive NO to sin and exert himself to the doing of the right. Here we have that incomprehensible and mysterious interaction between the free will of man and the sovereign grace of God.

TRANSLATION: *Wherefore, my beloved ones, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, carry to its ultimate conclusion your own salvation with fear and trembling, for God is the One who is constantly putting forth His power in you, both in the form of the constant activity of (your) being desirous of and the constant activity of (your) putting into operation His good pleasure.”*²

(underlines added)

***“ . . . It is not a “let go and let God”
affair. It is a “take hold with God”
business. . . ”***

KNOWLEDGE ALONE IS USELESS

Background Reading: 2 Peter 1:4-8

There are many Christians who have an intellectual knowledge of God’s laws and principles of victory and blessing. They may even understand the mechanics of how these laws operate. But while they seem to know a lot about the Word of God, they are unable to receive the promises of God. For example, many Christians may know that healing is available through Jesus. However, many are unable to personally appropriate the healing promises for themselves.

Intellectual knowledge alone of God’s Word will achieve nothing spiritually and be of very little use physically. It is only revelation knowledge - knowledge revealed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit - which will enable us to appropriate the promises. Once Christians have revelation knowledge of God’s Word in any area, there are two further elements needed to make this knowledge fruitful.

1. We need the wisdom of God to know how to correctly apply the knowledge we have.

2. We then need to act in faith according to the knowledge and wisdom we have received, with the Divine Nature energizing our human nature.

So we need revelation knowledge and the wisdom of God to apply it - we then need to act on it in faith. In this way the scriptures can become a reality in our lives, and we can receive the promises of God.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:20 For all the promises of God in Him (Christ) are yes, and in Him Amen (are sure), unto the glory of God by us (as we allow God's graces to work in us).

Therefore:

HEBREWS 6:12 That you be not slothful (lazy and sluggish towards the things of the Lord), but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

God's laws of blessing and protection are set in place for the benefit of all mankind. It is up to each one of us to seek out and discover what is needed so that we may walk in the victory which God's laws promise.

The promises are, however, not meant to be the most important aspect of our lives. Rather, the prosperity to be most valued is the journey along the way which enriches one's soul. While certainly healing of the body is needed, the journey to that place of healing can often provide a far greater blessing as our relationship with the Lord is strengthened and deepened. Through the journey we can work out our weaknesses, discover the mind of God on many things, pray, laugh and cry. We can also develop a deep gratitude for God - His love, mercy and grace.

“. . . While certainly healing of the body is needed, the journey to that place of healing can often provide a far greater blessing as our relationship with the Lord is strengthened and deepened. . . ”

We must progress in faith's journey, working out our own salvation not in our strength but in the strength of the Holy Spirit Who dwells within us. Again, Kenneth Wuest explains it as follows:

“WORKING OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION

Before attempting to explain this passage (Philippians 2:12-13), we must be clear as to what it does not teach. There is no idea here of an unsaved person doing good works to earn salvation, and for two reasons, first, because those addressed were already saved, and second, because the Bible is clear in its teaching that “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5). Again, the passage does not mean that a Christian should work out an inworked salvation. There is no such idea in the Greek.

The English translation is good, if one uses the words “work out” as one does when referring to the working out of a problem in mathematics, that is, carrying it to its ultimate goal or conclusion. The Greek word here means just this.

The words “your own salvation,” are to be taken in their context. The working out of the Philippians' salvation was affected in some way by the presence of Paul with them and his absence from them. When Paul was with them, his teaching instructed them, his example inspired them, his encouragement urged them on in their growth in grace. Now in his absence they were thrown upon their own initiative. They must learn to paddle their own canoe. Thus Paul sets before them their human responsibility in their growth in grace, for sanctification is in the apostle's mind. They have their justification. Their glorification will be theirs in eternity. Their growth in Christlikeness is the salvation concerning which Paul is speaking. Thus, the saints are exhorted to carry their growth in grace to its ultimate goal, Christlikeness. I John 3:2 speaks of the saint's future conformation to the image of Christ, and (3:3) says, “And every man that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself even as he is pure.”

The salvation spoken of in verse twelve is defined for us in verse thirteen, namely, the definite act of willing to do God's good pleasure and the doing of it. That is the saint's responsibility from the human standpoint. But the saint is not left without resources with which to do both, for God the Holy Spirit indwelling him produces in him both the willingness and the power to do His will. The saint avails himself

of both of these by fulfilling the requirements laid down by our Lord in John 7:37, 38, namely, a thirst or desire for the fullness of the Spirit, and a trust in the Lord Jesus for that fullness In verse twelve we have human responsibility, and in verse thirteen, divine enablement." ³ (underlines added)

LIGHT EXPOSES DARKNESS

Background Reading: 1 John 1:5-7

The truth is Light and when allowed to shine in a person's life, this Light will expose and dispose of darkness (bondage). But darkness will only be expelled in the areas in which this spiritual Light is allowed to shine. This will take yieldedness to God's will, not ours. Note too that God's spiritual Light is a part of His essence, His presence. It is not just light as we perceive a lighted room. Spiritual Light provides the power to bring change and to deliver those in the bondage of ignorance and the darkness of deception.

“. . . God's spiritual Light is a part of His essence, His presence – and provides the power to bring change and to deliver those in the bondage of ignorance and the darkness of deception. . .”

Christians will continue to have areas of spiritual darkness in their lives until they allow the Light of God's Word to enter every area. To use a natural illustration, when we turn on a light in a darkened room, all darkness leaves as the light shines. Then when the light is switched off, the darkness returns. So too in the spiritual realm, when we allow God's truth (His Light) to shine in an area of our lives, the darkness in that area has to leave. As we have said, this will only take place as we yield to the Holy Spirit, laying down our thinking and desires in order to embrace His thinking and desires. Jesus said:

JOHN 12:46 “I am come a Light into the world, that whosoever believes on Me (and My Word) should (will)

not abide in darkness (for Christians this relates to the areas in which they believe).”

JOHN 12:35 Then Jesus said unto them, “**Yet a little while is the Light with you. Walk while you have the Light, lest darkness come upon you: for he who walks in darkness knows not where he goes.**

JOHN 12:36 While you have Light (Jesus Himself is the Light), believe in the Light (make Christ the central focus of your life and living: E.S.B.), that you may be the children of Light ”

JOHN 3:21 But he who does truth (lives by the truth) comes to the Light, that his deeds may be made manifest (clearly revealed), that they are wrought in God (performed in dependence on Him). (Note that one who lives according to the truth does not fear, hate or shun the Light but comes willingly to the Light: John 3:19-20)

As we allow truth to enter our hearts through meditating on the Word of God and fellowshiping with our Father, we are allowing soul-enriching Light into our lives. We not only need the written Word, we also need to know the Author of that Word, for it is by and through Him that all truth, and hence all Light, comes. When Light is allowed to shine, the darkness has to depart - for darkness cannot enter a lighted room and darkness cannot return where Light continues to shine. So let us be truth-centred and focused on God’s Word. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to gently reveal His truths to us as we seek to live in the Light. Let us then embrace that which is revealed so that we can become one with the Lord in these areas of truth revealed.

“. . .As we allow truth to enter our hearts through meditating on the Word of God and fellowshiping with our Father, we are allowing soul-enriching Light into our lives. . .”

When the Light enters an area of our lives, our eyes are opened. We can then see clearly in that area for the darkness has been removed.

JOHN 8:12 . . . I am the Light of the world (He is the Light of the World, because He is the Source of its Life): he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life (in effect, says that all who do not follow Jesus, walk in darkness). (E.S.B.)

Jesus thus identifies Himself as the Source of spiritual Light, for without God and His presence, the world is in darkness, in the bondage of sin and spiritual death. The Light of God is in Jesus. We who are in Jesus are in this Holy Light also, having been spiritually cleansed of the darkness in our spirit. We then need the truths of God's Word so that our minds can be renewed and other areas of darkness removed from our lives - as we allow the Light to enter.

PSALM 119:105 Your Word (Oh Lord) is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path (showing me the way I should go).

Scripture tells us if we are ignorant of truth, we are walking in darkness and are not aware of where we are going. We need the Light of truth shining in every area of our lives so we can be vessels of Light which radiate God's love to the world.

MATTHEW 5:14 You are the light of the world (Christians are to reflect the light that comes from Christ). A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid (we are not to hide that light but to show it forth - true light, in fact, will not be hidden).

MATTHEW 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works (of faith - your living witness, true faith will produce works of righteousness: James 2:17-20), and glorify your Father Who is in heaven (works led and empowered by the Holy Spirit will

bring glory to God; other works glorify man and are not what is being referred to here: 1 Corinthians 3:12-13).

Above all things let us therefore seek the Giver of this Light, and let us then journey with Him and no other. This is how our relationship is meant to develop. But be aware that He also dwells with other Believers, and at times He speaks to us not only in the quiet of the night, but through other faith-filled Christians. This is one reason why the Word tells us not to forsake fellowshiping with others in the Lord:

HEBREWS 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is (it is important that Believers assemble together, however the meeting might be conducted: E.S.B.); but exhorting one another (encouraging and lifting one another up in the faith): and so much the more, as you see the day (of the Rapture) approaching.

Therefore we can fellowship with God by ourselves or with others, and as we do so, we can allow His Light and His presence to shine through and give us both comfort and direction.

May you have the victory in Christ!

For further information or teaching material to help you grow in the Christian faith, please visit:

CROSSROADS INTERNATIONAL
FULL GOSPEL MINISTRIES
crossroadsministries.org.au

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

- 1 Dake F.J., Dake's Annotated Reference Bible, pg.241 of the New Testament.
- 2 Wuest K.S., Word Studies From The Greek New Testament, Philippians 2:12,13.
- 3 Wuest K.S., Word Studies From The Greek New Testament, Wuest's Golden Nuggets From The Greek New Testament, pg. 69.

*"We have a vision
to see people living
in abundant life
by the power of God
through Jesus Christ"*



www.crossroadsministries.org.au