

Work out your Salvation

The apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 2:12 to “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Many who first read this verse are confused because it seems to suggest that “work” is somehow a necessary element in salvation. However, a little study reveals that what Paul mean is that we are to look very carefully, digging deep into our hearts, to work out, that is bring up out of the depth of our souls, the evidence of our salvation. In some very rare instances that evidence is so irresistible that it flows up to the surface by itself as a beautiful aura, revealing the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. I was blessed to have known such a person for a while. She is now at “Home” with our Lord.

The disconcerting part of Paul’s instruction, and one about which I’ve never read a commentary, is the “fear and trembling.” Often in the Scriptural translation, the word fear is used to express what the original language refers to as “reverential awe.” But here, “fear” means fear. This meaning is amplified and compounded by adding the “trembling”, which in the original means just what it means in English. Nothing in Scripture is superfluous or without purpose. It is all there for our learning (Romans 15:4). So Paul did not add that phrase “with fear and trembling” just to take up space, or for us to simply glance over and forget. It is my belief after much prayer and meditation, that perhaps the Holy Spirit through Paul is saying to us, something like this:

“You had better dig down into your souls and bring out what you find, so that you can examine it in order to prove to yourself that you are saved. Just because you said the sinner’s prayer and “accepted” Jesus, and now “feel” saved, doesn’t mean you are. Until you actually do this “work out,” you have no real reason to believe that you are saved. The matter should be of such profound importance to you that you cannot help but fear and tremble until you know with certainty, having sought the evidence, which is in you. ‘For if salvation is yours, you will find Me residing in your heart.’ (1Cor 6:19)

Thus, it is more than simply bringing the evidence of your salvation to the surface for the world to see, and by which it may be favorably influencing as you witness, but rather for you to see and to know that it is real. Have you followed this advice? Have you actually looked carefully inside of yourself and tried to “work out” your salvation? Have you done so with “fear and trembling”? I spent a larger part of these seven years since I first “accepted” Jesus, trying to “work” it out. I did so with fear and even experienced “trembling” during times of intense prayer regarding the matter. If you have never followed this advice by Paul, isn’t it time you did? Perhaps, you have not done so because you believe that your faith is most certainly a saving faith, and, therefore, you need no further evidence. But remember, Paul was speaking to an assembly of those who believed they were saved, just as he is speaking to us today through the Scripture. This was not his only message in this vein. In 2Corinthians 13:5, he tells us again to “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.” There are millions who have “accepted” Jesus and, therefore, believe they are saved. We also know that many, perhaps most, have not been accepted by Jesus because their faith is not a real and saving faith. I pray you will work out your salvation, and examine yourself, in order to find that absolute assurance before it is too late.