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CONTINUING

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Working Out Salvation.

Nothing could be more fundamental to Paul's conception of salvation than his teaching as to its relation to "works." He is persistently insistent that this relation is that of cause rather than of effect. The "not out of works—but unto good works," of Ephesians ii. 9-10, sounds the keynote of his whole teaching. In "good works," therefore, according to Paul "salvation" finds its realization: the very essence of salvation is holiness of life—"sanctification of the spirit." And equally in "salvation" "good works" find their only root: and it is only on the ground of the saving work of God that men may be hopefully exhorted to good works. As it is pregnantly stated in the passage from Ephesians we have already adverted to, God has prepared beforehand good works, to our walk in which we are introduced by a creative act on His part, in Christ Jesus (Eph. ii. 10). Accordingly his epistles (as is the whole New Testament) are full of particular instances of appeals to conduct based on the inception and working in us of the saving activity of God (*e. g.*, 1 Thess. ii. 12; 2 Thess. ii. 13-15; 1 Romans vi. 2; 2

Cor. v. 14; Col. i. 10; Phil. i. 21, ii. 12, 13; 2 Tim. ii. 19). Possibly in Phil. ii. 12, 13, we meet with the most precise expression of this appeal. There the saint is exhorted to "work out his own salvation" just because "it is God who is the worker in him of both the willing and the doing, in pursuance of His good-pleasure." If there is an antinomy involved in this collocation of duty and motive, it is in this passage certainly brought to its sharpest point. There are also many minor matters of interest in the language of the passage, which attract us to its study. Let us try to see briefly just what the Apostle says in it.

Not Sinners But Saints.

It will be useful to bear in mind from the beginning that the exhortation of Phil. ii. 12, 13 is addressed not to sinners but saints: it is to "the saints in Christ Jesus" (i. 1) that Paul is speaking. That is to say, this exhortation has reference not to entrance into Christian life but to the prosecution to its appropriate goal of a Christian life already entered into. This is already advertised to us by the very verb used. Paul does not say simply "work your sal-

vation," but "work out your salvation"—employing a compound verb which throws its emphasis on the end, "bring your salvation to its completion." It is also involved in the contextual connection. This exhortation closes a paragraph which had begun (i. 27) with the appeal, "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ;" and it closes it with a reversion to the same dominant thought. These Philippian readers already stood with the Apostle in the fellowship of the gospel: his earnest desire for them was for a complete realization in life of all that the gospel meant. They had entered upon the race; let them run it through to the goal. They had in principle received salvation in believing; let them work this salvation now completely out in life. At the opening of the letter Paul had expressed his confidence that, as God had begun a good work in them, He would perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ (i. 6). He now exhorts them to strive to attain the same high end, "Work out your own salvation," i. e., work it completely out, advance it to its accomplishment, bring it to its capstone and crown it with its pinnacles.

The Pathway Of Virtue.

Had it not been brought into doubt by some students of the passage, it would seem a work of supererogation to pause to assure ourselves that what Paul has in mind in his exhortation to "work out salvation" is primarily the attainment of ethical perfection. The eschatological reference of "salvation" must not, of course, be obscured. But neither must it be obscured that the pathway that leads to the eschatological goal of salvation is that walk in good works unto which Christians have been created in Christ Jesus, that "fruitage of righteousness" which is

through Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God, with which the Apostle longs to see the Philippians filled "against the day of Christ" (i. 10, 11). When he exhorts his readers at the close of this paragraph "to work out their own salvation," he obviously has the same thing in mind which he had at its beginning, when he exhorted them to "let their manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ;" and the same thing which he explains in the course of it to include steadfastness in testimony to the gospel, love to the brethren, humility of mind and the like Christian virtues. In the acquisition and cultivation of such graces they would be "working out their salvation," realizing in life in its ever growing completeness what is involved in "salvation" as its essential contents.

Spiritual Independence.

The form and language in which the exhortation is cast, is naturally colored by the situation in which the writer found himself at the moment and the condition in which he conceived his readers to stand. For the Apostle was no abstract essayist, but wrote out of a burning heart, as a practical man to practical men, eager to meet the actually existent state of affairs. He had himself been interrupted in the midst of his work and cast into prison: he was laboring under deep anxiety lest his violent removal from the care of the infant churches should unfavorably affect their Christian development. He had therefore already described at considerable length how his imprisonment had not elsewhere injured the progress of the gospel (i. 12 sq.), and had sought to separate the Philippians from dependence on his initiative (i. 27). He very naturally reverts to the same consideration now and makes his absence from his readers only a reason for re-

doubled exertions on their part, even hinting, perhaps, that they should know that, after all, each man must busy himself with "his own salvation," and the help he can obtain from others must be insignificant. This surely is, in part at least, the account to give of the emphatic pronoun,—*"work out your own salvation,"*—immediately connected as it is with the reference to the effect which his presence or absence should have on their activity: "not as if (you did so) only because I was present, but now much rather because I am absent, work out your own salvation." It is as much as to say, let the things that have happened to me fall out in your case too rather for the furtherance of the gospel: for if you have ever in any measure depended on me, my very removal should stir you up to increased effort—for after all it is *your own* salvation not my joy that is primarily at stake for you. It is possible meanwhile that this emphasis on "your own" may be in part due also to a reference back to the work of Christ so touchingly portrayed in the immediately preceding context: if Christ was willing to do and suffer all this for the salvation of *others*, should not you be willing to do and suffer in imitation of Him, for *your own* salvation? But in any case the main account of the emphasis thrown on the words would seem to be found in the reference to his readers' possible over-dependence on Paul's initiative.

Submissiveness Of Temper. One of the chief dangers in which the Apostle had found the Philippians to stand arose from a tendency among them to pride and high-mindedness, or rather, perhaps, we should say, to party-spirit and to selfishness (ii. 1-4). It was therefore that he was led to devote the early part of this chapter to urging them

to beware of faction and vain-glory and to cultivate lowliness of mind: and it was on this account that he adduces for their imitation Christ's great example of self-humiliation for the good of others (ii. 5 sq.). Of course allusion to their most prominent ethical danger could not be absent from this closing exhortation, in which he sums up his desire for their ethical perfection. It is natural therefore that the Apostle, after his gracious conciliatory habit, should pause at the outset to recognize the general submissiveness of disposition which his readers had hitherto shown, in accordance with the example of Christ: for the back reference of the words, "even as ye have always submitted," to the "becoming submissive even until death" of verse 8 is unmistakable. And it is due doubtless to the same cause that he throws so strong an emphasis, in the very exhortation itself, on the spirit in which they were to "work out their own salvation," namely "*with fear and trembling,*"—that is to say, with due recognition of their humble estate in the sight of that God whose servants they were, and whose salvation they were now exhorted to use all diligence in realizing.

Fear and Trembling. We must pause a moment on these words, "with fear and trembling." For the immense emphasis that is thrown upon them constitutes them, as has been recently convincingly pointed out by E. SCHAEFER (*Greifswalder Studien*, presented to H. CREMER, 1895, p. 229 sq.), the hinge of the passage. The effect of this emphasis is that Paul does not here exhort his readers so much to "work out their salvation" as to work it out specifically "with fear and trembling." What he says in effect is, "Let it be with fear and trembling that you work out your

own salvation." The whole force of the exhortation, in fact, accumulates on these words, "with fear and trembling." It is to the preservation of this state of mind in the working out of their salvation that the Apostle is really urging his readers. Now, it is undeniable that there seems something strange in this. Why should the Apostle lay such stress on "fear and trembling" as the characterizing spirit of the Christian effort? Is Christianity, after all, even more than Judaism, which HEGEL (though mistakenly) called the religion of fear *par excellence*, just the religion of slavish terror—every step in the cultivation of which is to be driven on by "fear and trembling?" What becomes then of that fundamental tone which resounds through every sentence and word and syllable of this very Epistle to the Philippians,—that of "rejoice in the Lord" (iii. 1)? What harmony can exist between the two exhortations: "Let it be specifically with fear and trembling that ye work out your own salvation," and "Rejoice in the Lord, always: again I will say, Rejoice" (iv. 4)? What union can there be between such carking anxiety and abounding joy, as twin states of heart characterizing the entire Christian walk? It is certainly puzzling to find the Apostle throwing the stress of his exhortation on these words; and it deserves our most careful scrutiny.

The Example Of our Lord. The puzzle is only increased when we observe, as we must observe at once on reading the exhortation itself,—that is, the twelfth verse,—in its context, that Paul's purpose is obviously to *encourage* not to *frighten* his readers, to enhearten not to dishearten them in their Christian walk. When we consider the inducements which he brings to bear on them to give force

to his exhortation, we cannot believe that its nerve is fear lest they should not after all not attain the end, but rather assurance that the end shall be certainly gained. For Paul places this exhortation between the two most powerful encouragements that could possibly be brought to bear upon a Christian's conduct,—the example of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. "So then, my beloved," he says, in introducing the exhortation. And this "so then" looks back upon and takes hold upon that marvellous exposition of the self-abnegation of Christ and his consequent great reward, which the Apostle had given in verses 5-11. "So then"—seeing that you have this great example so plainly and so powerfully set before you, in imitation of it and inspired by its great lesson,—do you "work out your own salvation." The exhortation is, to be sure, broadened beyond the specific application of the premiss: the particular exemplary act adduced from Christ's great transaction is his self-abnegation, "accounting others better than Himself:" and the exhortation to the Philippians to "work out their own salvation" includes more than a recommendation of self-abnegation. The logical nexus, of course, lies in the fact that the special fault of the Philippians, fresh in the Apostle's mind as requiring eradication as they advanced toward Christian perfection, was precisely that high-mindedness which was slow to look on the things of others as well as on their own things; and the special virtues they needed to cultivate in completing their salvation were just those virtues of self-abnegation to which the example of Christ would inspire them. Hence the fitness of this example to their case. But there seems no fitness in it to ground a specific appeal to "fear and trembling" as the proper state of mind in which they

should prosecute their working out of their own salvation. Awe, reverence, humility, yes: these would be suitable frames of feeling for him who would work under the inspiration of such an example. But fear and trembling,—anxious dread lest failure after all should be the end of endeavor,—how could the example of Christ's great act of humiliation, issuing in so tremendous a reward, fitly call out such a state of mind?

The All-Efficiency Of God.

The case is similar with the support which the Apostle brings to his exhortation from the other side. "Let it be with fear and trembling," says the Apostle, "that you work out your own salvation, *for*"—and this "*for*" looks forward to and takes hold upon the sharpest possible assurance of divine aid. "For He that worketh in you both the willing and the doing, in pursuance of His good pleasure, is none other than God." Surely this tremendous assertion of the implication of God Himself in the work he is exhorting his readers to prosecute, affords no reason why they should carry on that work in the grip of a dreadful fear lest they should after all fail. We must not neglect the emphasis that falls on the word "God" here—second only to that which falls on the words "with fear and trembling," so that in effect these two ideas are brought into sharp collocation, and each enhances the stress thrown on the other. Nor should we neglect to notice, what has recently been brought out by KÜHL (*Studien and Kritiken*, 1898, p. 567), that Paul is adducing here a general proposition—one in one form or another familiar to all readers of his epistles—the great truth central to his whole system of doctrine,—that "it is God who in all

matters of salvation, is the energizer in men of both the willing and the doing, in pursuance of His good pleasure." It is the same great fact that the Apostle planted at the root of the confidence of his Ephesian readers (i. 11) when he traced all the blessings that had been brought them to the purpose "of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." It is the same great fact that rings out in the triumphant cry of Romans viii. 31—"If God be for us, who can be against us." Surely, when he placed the Almighty Arms beneath them, the Apostle cannot have intended to instill into his readers a more poignant sense of the uncertainty of the issue of their labors, and to justify to them a demand that it shall be especially "in fear and trembling"—in doubt and terror as to the result—that they must prosecute their great task of "working out their own salvation." The great fact that he adduces is awe-inspiring enough. How solemnizing the assurance that God works in us all our good impulses! How fitted to teach us humility and beget in us a godly fear as we walk the pathway provided for us! But how little fitted to lead us to despair of the result, to live in dreadful uncertainty as to the outcome! "If God is for us, who is against us!"

Real Meaning Of "Fear and Trembling."

The context, then, certainly lends no support to the emphatic words "with fear and trembling," if they be taken as an exhortation to an attitude of doubt and hesitation,—to the preservation of a fear of failure as an incitement to diligence in labor. On the contrary, the context demands an encouraging, not a warning, note for the exhortation. This raises the suspicion that we may have mistaken the sense of Paul in the use of the phrase

"with fear and trembling." And a closer scrutiny confirms this suspicion. The collocation of the two words "fear" and "trembling," it seems, had become something of a set formula with the Apostle, possibly grounded in the usage of the two together in such passages of the Septuagint as Genesis ix. 2, Is. xix. 16; and this formula seems no longer to have had the value to him of the two words in combination, but rather to have come to express little more than the proper reverence due to a superior. For example, in Ephesians vi. 5, when the Apostle exhorts servants to be obedient to their masters "with fear and trembling," he can scarcely intend to recommend to servants a spirit of craven fear before their master's face. Did he not rather wish to commend to them an appropriate recognition of the distance between master and slave, and the respectful reverence befitting the relation in which they stood? So in 2 Cor. vii. 15, when we are told that the Corinthians received Titus "with fear and trembling," we are surely not to understand that they received him with a vivid dread lest they should fall short of winning his favor, but rather simply that they received him with the respect and obedience due to his official position as one set over them in the Lord. Similarly, in 1 Cor. ii. 3, the Apostle surely means only to say that he acted in his work at Corinth with due respect to his commission and subjection to the Spirit who accompanied his preaching with His power. In a word, it is clear enough that in the phrase "with fear and trembling," we have to do with a set formula, which, in the Apostle's mind and lips, finds its reference to the attitude of dependence, reverence and obedience befitting an inferior, and is therefore especially related with the ideas of submissiveness and subjec-

tion. It owes its place in our present passage obviously to its correlation with the immediately precedent phrase, "As ye have always obeyed" (verse 12), which itself goes back to the obedience of Christ's great example (verse 8). If CHRYSOSTOM, therefore, is formally wrong in, without more ado, paraphrasing it by "with humility of spirit," he is not so far astray as might at first sight be thought in the substance of the matter. What the Apostle would seem to say, in effect is just this: "As ye have always hitherto been submissive, so let it be in the same submissiveness of spirit that ye bring your salvation to its completion, seeing that, as you know, the energizer who works in you both the willing and the doing is God, in pursuance of His good pleasure." It is to reverence, obedience, humility in their Christian walk in the consciousness of the saving power of God operative in them, to which he exhorts his readers; not to terror and dread lest after all their labor they might yet prove to be castaways. It is not the difficulty of the task that he is emphasizing; but the solemnity of it.

Paul's Own Commentary. It is under the encouragement of these two great facts, then, that Paul here stirs up his Philippian readers to the sacred work of advancing in the Christian walk steadily to the great end—the example of Christ and the interior working of God in their hearts. We have ventured to speak of the latter as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned by name. But it is obviously His indwelling work that is adverted to; and accordingly the seventh chapter of Romans, with its sequel in the eighth chapter, really provides an extended commentary on our passage. The process which is there displayed

to us, as the new power not ourselves making for righteousness is implanted in the heart, and from that vantage-ground wages its victorious war against the sin still entrenched in the members—is here compressed for us into one sharp, crisp word of declaration. The Christian works out his own salvation under the energizing of God, to whose energizing is due every impulse to good that rises in him, every determination to good which he frames, every execution of a good purpose which he carries into effect. And in view of the great fact that this power within him making for righteousness is none other than God Himself, surely the only proper attitude of the Christian in working out his salvation is one of "fear and trembling,"—of awe and reverence in the presence of the Holy One, of submission and obedience to His leading, of dependence and trust on His guidance. This, in effect, seems to be the Apostle's meaning. It is, in a word, an uncovering of the sources of sanctification: and a reference of it to an origin in every step to God's gracious activities.

The Exhortation Paraphrased. We may then perhaps attempt now a paraphrase of the passage. "So, then, my beloved,—in view of Christ's great example of self-abnegation—even as ye have always obeyed, so now, not as if it were only because I was present, but much more now just because I am absent, let it be in a spirit of reverent submissiveness that you carry your salvation to its completion; for remember that He that effects in you not only the willing but also the doing, is none other than God Himself—and He does it in pursuance of His good pleasure." Or more at large:—"Under the inspiration of this great example that Christ Jesus has set us, an example of

humble submission even down to death, and of His consequent reward, I may repeat and strengthen my exhortation to you. I gladly allow that you have never been failing in submissiveness of spirit. When I was present with you I saw it and rejoiced in it. I trust it was not due to my presence only that you were able to exhibit so Christ-like a disposition. After all, it is not my pleasure but your own salvation that should primarily engage your thoughts. And if my presence were indeed useful to you, how much more effort should you make now that I can no longer be with you and you are thrown on your own resources. Nay, let me not so speak. You are not in any case thrown on your own resources. Let it be with godly awe in your hearts and reverent fear of mind that you engage in this solemn work. For it is, you will remember, none other than God Himself who prompts you to the effort,—whose it is to effect within you both the wish and the performance: and this He does in the prosecution of His blessed purpose of good towards you. It is in His hands that you are in this work: it is thus a holy work,—in the prosecution of which you may, therefore, well put off the sandals from your feet. In devout submissiveness, then, carry it on, with all diligence, and depend on no creature's impulse or help: it is God who in it works in and through you and so fulfils His gracious will with respect to you." B. B. W.

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A Common Assumption. It is quite commonly assumed that the proper object of historical interpretation is to ascertain the meaning which the words of a given text bore to those who first heard them; or at any rate to the