***Applied Christianity - PH38-02

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 2:12-13***

Please open your Bibles to Philippians 2:12-13 on the subject of applied Christianity. As you know, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the God man, experienced the humiliation of death by crucifixion as He paid for the sins of mankind. This was a death which was particularly designed by the Roman Empire in order to provide maximum humiliation and public expression of society's contempt for a person. Following this humiliation, God the Father exalted the humanity of Jesus Christ to the highest degree of all who have ever been born. The exaltation of a God man, we have found, progress by four steps. When the Bible says that Christ has been exalted by the Father following humiliation, it meant that He had been resurrected; that He has ascended; that He is executing His session in heaven now; and, that His Second Advent will culminate this exaltation.

Therefore, the Father, we are told, has given His Son a rank and a dignity which is referred to as "The name." Jesus Christ is known in the Word of God as "The Name." This is a technical term for the highest rank and dignity in all creation. For this reason, all of humanity and all angels will one day bow in subjection to Jesus Christ, and openly acknowledge Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to the Father's glory.

Consequent to this kind of example of humiliation followed by exaltation, the apostle Paul, in Philippians 2:12-13 says, "Now, let's apply this to you and me where we live. So we come to applied Christian. In verse 12, we have the call to sanctification. You have all heard references to sanctification, and heard the confusion that exists in people's minds concerning this subject. There is a great deal of disorientation about the subject of sanctification, and yet it is something which the Bible tells us is the will of God for us. It is your business to see to it that you are sanctified. It is your business to pursue sanctification as the normal course of your Christian life. For this reason, we need to know what it's all about.

**Philippians 2:12**

So Paul, in Philippians 2:12, speaks first of all of a positive volition which has been expressed in the past. He says, "Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence." The word "wherefore" is this little Greek word "hoste," and it simply means "so then, therefore." It is introducing a logical conclusion based on these preceding verses which have described for us the humiliation and the consequent exaltation of Jesus Christ. As the Lord in His humanity obtained exaltation through humble obedience to the Father's will, so too are we to live out our days in humble obedience to the Father's will, anticipating a subsequent exaltation in our humanity.

He addresses them as "My beloved," which shows that he is speaking to believers who are in Christ. Jesus Christ is referred to as "The Beloved One." And we are in Christ, so therefore, we are in "the beloved." Those two words are very important. "Wherefore" or "therefore, so then, my beloved." The two words, "my beloved," indicate for us that we are dealing with Christians. We are going to talk to Christians about sanctification. We are not talking to unbelievers here about something that they should be seeking. This is something strictly for believers.

"My beloved, as you have always obeyed." The word "obeyed" is the Greek word "hupokouo." "Hupokouo" simply means "to listen." "As you have listened to me," in the sense of submitting to the teaching ministry of the apostle Paul. When Paul was teaching the Philippians, they were responding with positive volition to the instruction which they received. Grammatically, this is in the aorist tense, which viewed, as a whole, the many times that they responded to Paul's instruction. It is active which speaks to us of the positive volition that the Philippians chose to exercise. They recognized that they were not obeying simply a teacher, but they were obeying a truth. It is indicative which means that it was a statement of fact. These people had been characterized by this, Paul says, "As always." This is the Greek word "pantote," and it simply means "at all times." The consistent attitude of the Philippians toward their teacher in the Word of God was positive volition.

Many people come to a church service and, whether deliberately or subconsciously, they come with the attitude of negative volition. They come with the spirit of finding out exactly how much the preacher says that is wrong. They come with an attitude of negative indifference, and consequently, that's exactly what they're able to find and what they're able to discover.

So many commendations are unlike the Philippians. They did not come with the idea of seeing if they could find the preacher wrong. Because the preacher is only human, there is no doubt that you will find many things that you would like to see him do differently, or that you would have done better had you been in his place. But that is all beside the point. The quantity of a mature believer is receptivity to the Word of God, and the Philippians were consistently positive. That should be our attitude when we come to a church service. What you think is in error, you can set aside, and you can certainly leave that with the Lord. Your business is to get everything you can of positive understanding of the truth.

This was positive volition in the present, and it was found in two circumstances. "As you have always obeyed, not as in my presence." The first circumstance was in the presence. This is the "parousia" in the Greek. "Parousia" meant when Paul was there on the scene in Philippi teaching Bible classes. But he also connects this with his absence, or his "apousia;" that is, when he was in prison in Rome, as he was when he wrote this letter. Then, he was not able to be present with them in their meetings.

Both of these words, presence and absence, we must connect with "work out," and not with "have obeyed." Notice in the verse: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence." You might think that what he is saying is, "As you have obeyed when I was with you teaching you in Philippi, so now, while I am no longer with you, while I am absent from you, I want you to be obeying me also. You obeyed me when I stood face-to-face to teach you (which is God's basic order by which Christians learn the Word of God), but I want you to obey also when I am writing the letter." That's not what it says. That's connecting these two words, presence and absence, with "have obeyed." Do not connect them with "have obeyed."

Instead, connect them with "work out," which comes later. What he is saying is, "In my presence, you used to work out your salvation. Now, in my absence, also be working out your salvation." As to what that means, we will get to in a moment. The Philippians not only are to be pursuing a development of their salvation while Paul is present in their meetings, but they are to do the same thing now that he is absent from them, and not actually physically on the scene. These two attitudes are contrasted with "not" and "but" which, in the Greek, one is matched up against the other.

So what he is saying here is, "Therefore, you believers, as you have always obeyed. Your general characteristic has been positive response to the Word of God. You've listened. You've been respectful. You have paid attention, and you have received the Word of God. Now I am going to call upon you to do something else. Not as in my present only am I calling upon you to do this, but now much more in my absence I am calling upon you to do this. When I was with you, I did call upon you to do this thing. I call upon you even more so now--much more now--in my absence, I call upon you to do this." And what is that thing that he calls upon them to do?

**Work Out Your Salvation**

He is calling upon them, "To work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Those words in the Bible have been distorted and twisted and misinterpreted, and have created a great deal of confusion for Christians. This is because the people who want to work for salvation pounce upon this verse and say, "Aha, you see, the Bible tells you to work for your salvation. Salvation is a matter of good works." So let's look at the word that is used. Let's see what the Greek Bible is actually saying here.

What we are talking about is the Greek word "katergazomai." "Katergazomai" means to carry through to ultimate conclusion--to carry something through to its ultimate conclusion. It is the word which is used when you tell your son or your daughter to work out his arithmetic problems. You say, "Sit down and work out those arithmetic problems." What you are telling him to do is to take the problem, and go through a process which carries him to the answer of that problem. It carries that problem to its logical conclusion. It carries the mathematical processes that are indicated to the ultimate logical conclusion. That's what this word "katergazomai" means. It's a very significant, meaningful, technical word. You could never in the world know it from the English. It takes knowing the Greek word that is behind this English word "work out" for you to understand this. It is in the present tense which means this is a constant duty upon us that we should be working out our salvation. It is middle which means it will be for our personal benefit. And it is an imperative which means it is a divine command. God is ordering us to carry our salvation to its ultimate goal.

The word "salvation" is our familiar word "soteria" which means salvation from the guilt and the penalty of our sins. This is not a call to earn our salvation by good works. As a matter of fact, the Bible condemns any such idea, for example, in Ephesians 2:8-9 where it says you simply cannot secure eternal life through works. Paul is writing for people who are already saved. He called them "my beloved." This is not a call to retain their salvation, since it is a permanent grace gift, and it's dependent upon what God says. Please remember, salvation is never dependent upon what you do. Salvation is dependent only upon what God does. He has provided it; He has made it possible; and, He offers it. All we do is simply accept it, and enter into its blessings and benefits. He keeps it going. You have nothing to do whatsoever with salvation. It is entirely a grace operation. For this reason, it is not something that we have to be concerned about losing, for we cannot lose it. That is not the subject which is being spoken of here. It is not working yourself into salvation. It is working out the logical implications and conclusions of salvation.

I want you to notice that it also has the words "your own," which is the Greek word "heautou" which means mind your own business in the process of living out your Christian life. That's what we're talking about here. We're speaking about sanctification. We're talking about moving from the point of faith in Christ onward into spiritual maturity, and on up to a full-blown spiritual maturity structure in your soul. This has to do with our daily living and our daily walk.

The Bible calls upon us to be concerned for our own personal salvation, and to limit our priesthood to our own priesthood. It does not call upon you to involve yourself and to make it your business to be probing into the process of another person's development of his spiritual maturity. You may be helpful; you may be invited; and, if you are a pastor-teacher, you may have a responsibility for instructing to that end, but even a pastor-teacher has to do it face-to-face in a group to maintain the individual's privacy in his priesthood. So that person can actually sit there and completely in his mind reject everything he hears; completely buck the communicator; and, do it in complete privacy. This is because he can work out only his own salvation, and only he can work that salvation out.

So the ultimate goal of one's salvation is spiritual maturity in the soul. It's developing the capacity to apply doctrine to life situations. This view of salvation is that of progressive sanctification. This is progressing toward a fulfillment of a goal. This is not progressing toward justification. It has to do with applying doctrine after salvation.

**The Doctrine of Sanctification**

So let's look at the doctrine of sanctification here for a moment. The minute you say sanctification, there are some people who get this idea in their mind: "I will come to a place in life where I am completely sinless. I will be able to come to a place where I am absolutely perfect." John Wesley, when he separated from the Church of England and began what is known today as the Methodist denomination, made a great deal of the doctrine of sanctification in terms of sinless perfection. He actually recorded in one of his diaries the very day when he came to the point of sinless perfection. I think it was near 1760. But he came to the point and he felt that he had achieved a personal sanctification, and that he had come to an absolute loving relationship with Jesus Christ (as he put it), and that from thence forth, he never again disobeyed God.

This concept has been made a great thing in the Methodist church and in many other denominations. The charismatic movement, for example, also structures itself upon this concept of sinless perfection being achieved. This concept of sanctification is the one (to begin with) that we must keep in mind because the question is: is that what the Bible is telling us? Is the Bible telling us that we progress to the point where we will be able never again to sin?

1. Point number one on the doctrine of sanctification is that the concept of sanctification is found in the root words. Here are two root words. In the Old Testament, it's "qathash" (transliterated). This Hebrew word is matched by a Greek word in the New Testament which is "hagiazo," and both of these words mean "set apart." That's point number one. What sanctification means is to be determined by the words that were used to describe sanctification.

So the first concept is that sanctification is found in these root words "qathash" in the Hebrew and "hagiazo" in the New Testament Greek. Both of them mean "set apart." These root words are used to make up many other Hebrew and Greek words which have these root words in them, and they are translated by a variety of words in your English translation. These include the words: holy; hallow; holiness; hallowed; consecrate; saint; sanctify; and, sanctification. Anytime you read those words in the English Bible, they all refer to these two basic words. They are somehow connected with them, and each of them, therefore, basically means "to separate," or "to set apart to something." The basic meaning is to set apart from the secular and the sinful to that which is sacred in its purpose for God's use. The basic meaning of the words never connotes sinlessness. That's the first thing to understand. The basic words from which the doctrine of sanctification is derived never means sinlessness. It always means simply to be set apart.

1. Sanctification, therefore, means something or someone is set apart to God. So the Bible speaks of a holy nation; holy priests; holy prophets; holy apostles; holy men; holy women; and, holy brethren. None of them were sinless, yet all of them are described as being holy, sanctified, or set apart. You can read about this in Exodus 19:10-14, Exodus 28:41, and Ezekiel 37:28.

In the city of Corinth, there were many churches throughout that city. These churches were plagued by a high level of carnality. Yet, when the apostle Paul wrote to this church, he referred to them as people who were sanctified, and he called them saints (1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8). Certainly, no one would be ready to say that the people who made up the churches of Corinth were sinless people, yet Paul says they were sanctified. Paul says they were saints, by which he means they were set apart, because that's what the basic meaning of the word is. That's what the Bible means when it talks about sanctification.

As a matter of fact, inanimate objects are also said to be sanctified. You have a holy mountain; a holy temple; holy days; holy feasts; and, even a holy war (Joel 1:14, Joel 2:15-16, Joel 3:9, Exodus 19:23, Deuteronomy 5:12, Exodus 30:29, 2 Chronicles 7:16, Leviticus 27:14ff). So there are many verses which indicate that objects can be sanctified.

How can you sanctify a mountain? How can you sanctify a war which will have much in the way of sin which is involved in the process of executing that war? Inanimate objects and actions are described as sanctified. Well, you can if you understand what the word means. They are set apart. The mountain upon which Moses went up to receive the Ten Commandments and the Law was a sanctified mountain because God had set it apart for this particular divine use. For this reason, they said be sure no animal touches the mountain; and, be sure no human being touches the mountain, or they will die. The mountain is sanctified. There is no sin involved in this issue. In Israel, the first born of man and animal were sanctified to God (Exodus 13:2, Numbers 8:17). There was no sin involved with animals, yet they are spoken of as being sanctified.

1. Because of infinite holiness, God Himself is internally sanctified. That is, He is set apart from sin (Leviticus 21:8, John 17:19). God has never sinned. God cannot sin. But God is sanctified by that very fact. He is set apart from sin.
2. God the Father sanctifies. We have this in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. The Son sanctifies (Ephesians 5:26). The Holy Spirit sanctifies (Romans 16:15). Each member of the Godhead in some way sets us apart unto a special purpose and a special use. Thus each member of the Godhead has a part in our sanctification.
3. The Bible tells us that God the Father sanctified God the Son (John 10:36). Was Jesus Christ guilty of sin? His enemies tried to say He was. But He faced them, and said, "OK, point it out. Where is it?" And they could not answer Him. So John 10:36 makes it very clear that while the Father sanctified the Son, we know (since He was sinless) that this again had nothing to do with sin. This is a matter of being set apart to His mission. In that sense, He was sanctified by the Father.
4. God sanctified the priests and the people of Israel (Exodus 29:44, Exodus 31:13). Certainly both priests and people of Israel were sinful people. They were not sinless.
5. Man may sanctify himself by separating from sinful practices and thoughts (2 Timothy 2:21, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 2 Corinthians 7:1). If we set ourselves apart from evil, we have sanctified ourselves.
6. Man may sanctify persons and things (1 Corinthians 7:14, Exodus 19:14, 2 Chronicles 29:17). In 1 Corinthians 7, we have the example of a woman who is a believer who is married to an unbeliever. The Bible says that that unbelieving husband is sanctified. He's not even going to heaven, and the Bible says he's sanctified. Certainly he was not sinless, but the Bible says he's sanctified. What does that mean? It means that because he is joined to a born again wife, this man is set apart in God's eyes, and the hope for salvation is just multiplied for him. He comes under a blessing and under a care because he is related to this wife.

One thing can sanctify another thing (Matthew 23:17-19). Again, we see the impersonal involvement of sanctification. Here is something that is very crucial then. There are three aspects of sanctification which we should understand. This is the source of the problem and confusion on this subject:

* 1. First of all, there's positional sanctification. You can read about this in 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30, 1 Corinthians 6:11, and 1 Peter 1:2. This refers to the setting apart of every believer to eternal life through the work of Christ on the cross (Hebrews 10:10). All of you who are believers possess positional sanctification. You are in Christ. Therefore, you are set apart to eternal life. This in no way bears any relationship to your life as a Christian. This applies to those who are very weak Christians, and it applies as well to those who are strong Christians. This applies to those who are very sinful as Christians as well as to those who are very godly as Christians. This is positional sanctification. It is due to your position in Christ and your relationship to Him. It is as perfect, therefore, as Christ is perfect. Positional sanctification never means that you have achieved sinless perfection.
	2. Then there is experiential sanctification. We have this in 1 Thessalonians 4:3 and Romans 6. This refers to God's setting apart of the Christian in his daily life from acts of sin. This is determined by our yieldedness to God the Holy Spirit. It is our yieldedness to the Father through the confession of sins. It is through our learning of the Word of God through the grace system for learning God's word. It is our development of a spiritual maturity structure. This has to do with our daily experience and our daily walk. This is not a matter of our feelings and emotions any more than justification or forgiveness is. Sanctification is not something you feel. Generally, when people speak to you about having come to sinless perfection, this is almost always what they will do. They will refer to sometime when they just had a tremendous emotional experience with God, and they felt that they had just entered a wonderful new level of love. That's the key word. That's the code word, a new level of *love*, and, consequently, a freedom from sin.

Progress in experiential sanctification is determined by the divine provisions that God has provided to prevent you and me from sinning. Here is what prevents us from sinning. One is the intake of Bible doctrine through the grace system of perception (Psalm 119:11). Secondly, we are prevented from sinning by the intercession of Christ in Heaven, which we studied last time. We have many verses on this: Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; Luke 22:31-32; and, John 17:1-26. Jesus Christ intercedes. He prays for us, and that advances our experiential sanctification. Thirdly, there is the enabling power of the dwelling Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16, Romans 8:4). God the Holy Spirit lives in is and gives us the power to say, "No" to sin.

The one thing that you and I can never do is eradicate the old sin nature within ourselves. If you can't rub out the old sin nature, you can never arrive at sinlessness. Romans 7:21, 2 Corinthians 4:7, and John 1:8 all tell us that we cannot eradicate the old sin nature. It's there. But the spirit-filled status will give you victory over the old sin nature (Galatians 5:16-23). This sin nature has been judged on the cross. Therefore, its absolute power over the Christian has been broken (Romans 6:1-14).

Experiential sanctification is what is related to spiritual growth. So it's progressive. You can become more sanctified. As a matter of fact, if, from the day that you were born again to this point in time, you are not more sanctified in your experience, then you're not making progress in your Christian life. And that's bad. You must not be taking in the Word. Then you must be negative to the Word. Then you must not be someplace where the Word is being taught. Then you must be negligent of the Word yourself. Then you must be resistant to confessing sins so that God the Holy Spirit can move you along in your personal godliness. Experiential sanctification is related to growth in spiritual maturity (2 Peter 3:18, 2 Corinthians 3:18).

* 1. Then there is a third, and that's ultimate sanctification. This is found in 1 John 3:1-2, 1 Corinthians 15:51-57, and Philippians 3:21. This refers to being set apart in the presence of the Lord forever from the practice of sin. There will indeed come a time when the old sin nature will be eradicated from your being. There is a time when you will never again sin. There will never again be a sinful thought in your mind. There will never be a sinful word. There will never be a sinful action. That's what these people are trying to secure here on earth when they pursue the concept of sanctification in terms of sinless perfection. There is an ultimate setting apart from sin, but it is the final goal of salvation to be realized only in the Lord's presence. It is when we see Him, the Bible says, that we shall be like Him. 1 Thessalonians 5:22-23 tells us that the final goal of salvation is ultimate sanctification. This is sinless perfection.
1. The doctrine of sanctification cannot be interpreted by one's personal experience, but only by the Word of God. So if you come along and say, "Well, I just had this wonderful feeling. I was reading this book by this wonderful author, and I just was so moved, and I just felt so close to God, and I just felt that I had made it. People who believe in sinless perfection will tell you that you will progress in spiritual maturity gradually, but sinless perfection just snaps in a moment of time, and all of a sudden, you're in there. If you are taught that, what's going to happen?

You're a very sincere believer. You are out for the best that God has for you. Therefore, you will start going through whatever procedures have been laid out for you in order to come to the crossover point. It's a snap from one side to the other. It is not just gradually going to sinless perfection. It is just a snap, and the back is suddenly broken of the old sin nature, and you're out. You're free, never to sin again.

All you have to do is read the writings of somebody like Harry Ironside, the famed pastor of Moody Memorial church in Chicago in the days when he was involved with the Salvation Army, with its Methodist orientation, and the agonies through which this man went as he sought that sinless perfection status, and how it constantly eluded him. It eluded him because he was honest enough with himself to admit what he thought; what he said; what he did; and, what he was. There are many people who finally decide not to be quite so honest with themselves. They kid themselves into thinking that they have snapped across into the state of sinlessness. So you cannot determine this doctrine on your experience.

Sainthood is strictly a position, and it is not subject to progression, but spiritual maturity is. You are a saint. You cannot become more of a saint. So don't talk about some person and say, "Oh, Mr. Jones is such a saint." Well, he's either a saint or he isn't. Don't talk about Mr. Jones being such a saint because what you are saying is, "He is so good compared to somebody else. He is so good." You are either a saint or you are not a saint. There is no progression. But some people have more progression in their spiritual lives than others. That's true.

1. Our sanctification is the will of God (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, 7). In the Old Testament, we find this in Leviticus 20:26. The will of God was the same there. God says, "I want you to go on to where you sin less and you obey more. I want you to be less negative toward Me, and more positive toward Me. That is My will for you."
2. Sanctification is a matter of personal choice (Hebrews 12:14, 2 Timothy 2:21-22). It is your choice as to whether you are going to progress in your experiential sanctification. You have no control over your positional sanctification. You have no control over ultimate sanctification. Both those are committed. You have a great deal of control over your experiential sanctification. That you can determine.
3. Believers are sanctified by the Word of God (John 17:17, 1 Timothy 4:5). And, believers are sanctified by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2).
4. Christians are sanctified through faith in Christ (Acts 26:18). It is our belief in what the Lord has said that sets us apart from sin.

Believers are to sanctify God in their minds by knowing and explaining Bible doctrine (1 Peter 3:15). Every time you tell somebody something about the Word of God, you sanctify the Lord God in your heart.

**The Three Phases of Salvation**

1. Salvation has three phases. I want to connect these to sanctification so that you have these two related in your thinking. Phase one of salvation is in the past tense. This is the work of **justification**. The Bible speaks of salvation as something that has been completed in the past for every believer (Luke 7:50, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 2:15, Ephesians 2:5-8). This past tense of salvation is so perfect that the saved person can never again be lost. That's what John 5:24, John 8:28-29, and Romans 8:1 tell us. Salvation in the past tense produces positional sanctification. Your salvation, completed and perfect in the past, is attached to positional sanctification.
2. There is a phase two of salvation. Phase two is the present tense of salvation. The Bible speaks about a present salvation for you, and that is salvation from sin running your life. You have this in Romans 6:14, Romans 8:2, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 2:19-20, Philippians 1:19, Philippians 2:12-13, and 2 Thessalonians 2:13. This is salvation in the present tense and is related to **experiential sanctification**. Your present tense of salvation is being saved from the power of sin in your life. That is sanctification in experience.
3. Then there is a third phase to salvation which is in the future tense. The Bible speaks of a future salvation when believers are going to be just like the Lord Jesus Christ--absolutely sinless in their practice. That's **glorification**. It is a great tragedy for us in any way to have missed this particular provision that God has made for us. We find this in Romans 8:29, Romans 13:11, 1 Peter 1:5, and 1 John 3:2. This phase of salvation, as well as the first two, depend entirely upon the faithfulness of God, not upon man. This is salvation in the future tense that produces ultimate sanctification. That's where that is connected.

When Paul says, "Work out your salvation," he means experiential sanctification. Positional sanctification and ultimate sanctification are determined. However, you have something to say as to whether you will enter into what God will do with you in your experience. For this reason, he says to "Work this out with fear and trembling." The word "with" is the word "meta." "Meta" means "amid" or "accompanied with." While you are progressing in your spiritual life (in your conduct life), do it with fear. The word "fear" is the Greek word "phobos" which means "a dread and a terror." He also says do it "with trembling." The Greek word is "tromos" which means a quaking. You should approach your experience of sanctification with reverence and with awe of the consequences of carnality, remembering what the old sin nature can produce. Your salvation is going to be carried to its ultimate goal of spiritual maturity and godliness depending upon how you proceed to use the means of spiritual progress.

This is the pattern of sanctification which was demonstrated in the humanity of Jesus Christ so that He was able to fulfill His mission. It is a great tragedy if you, as a believer, should miss God's purpose for your life because of your taking sanctification lightly. That's why the Bible says this is the will of God for your life. This is because all of your rewards in heaven are hinged upon your progress in sanctification and experience. Our personal exaltation as human beings, in other words, is subject to fulfilling our life's mission, just as the Lord Jesus Christ was exalted because He fulfilled His. This is the primary target of the angelic attack.

**Philippians 2:13**

Verse 13 then ties this up. Here is the divine enablement. He says, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." "For" ("gar") is an introduction and explanation of what is coming. The Greek word for "it is" is the Greek word "eimi," and it means a present (always the case) God performing this in our behalf. It is God "theos," but with no article. It does not have the word "the." Remember when it's "the" God, it is referring to the Father. Here it is God the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, in the Greek sentence, God is the word that stands first, emphasizing that here is something in the way of experiential sanctification, that you should be pursuing, but which God the Holy Spirit is the one who accomplishes. Again, we're backing out of human achievement and human commendation. So it says, "It is God who works," which is "energeo." "Energeo" means simply "to operate," or "to be in action." It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit which produces both the desire and the attainment of experiential sanctification. This is part of the grace way of life. It is always the energizing available to the Christian. It is the Holy Spirit who does it. It is a principle we have stated.

"It is God who works in you;" that is, believers. It is God the Holy Spirit who operates (who energizes) you believers for two results which are, by the way, tied together with the words "both to will and to do." In the Greek, it's the two little words, "kai kai." So we know that these two are related. First of all, the Holy Spirit is going to cause you to will ("thelo"). The word "thelo" means "a definite determination of the will to do something." God the Holy Spirit is going to move your will in your experience to decide to do something. All day long, a believer is making decisions because the Spirit of God, to a believer who is progressing in his sanctification, is making definitive directions to him.

It is present tense, meaning that this is constantly occurring. It is active. He actively does this. I want you to notice that this is the infinitive. That indicates to us that this is God's purpose. It is God's purpose to guide you with definite directions. It is not God's purpose to let you drift along on some helter skelter emotional basis. This is His plan. Furthermore, He not only guides you with definite plans, but He also says "to do" (and it's that word "energeo" again). He operates in you to energize you to perform that which He has laid upon your mind to do. What the Holy Spirit calls upon us to perform, He also gives us the means and capacity to do. He constantly does it. He does it Himself. And again it's infinitive. This is His purpose. It is the purpose of God the Holy Spirit both to make you willing to do something and then to enable you to do it. And that's really great. Here, divine sovereignty moves in. We can count on Him to make us willing to do something, and then to give us the capacity and the enablement to do it. Why?

Philippians 2:13: "Both to will and to do of His good pleasure" is not right. The word "of" is misleading there. The Greek word is "huper." "Huper" means "because of." He does this because of His good pleasure. This is His "eudokia." "Good pleasure simply refers to the perfect will of God, the sovereign will of God. What God decides, God performs, because that is perfect and because He is perfect. So the Lord provides the goals; the means; and, the results of the Christian life. Experiential sanctification makes it possible to perform God's good pleasure through confession of sin and the learning of the Word.

Please remember that God is not pleased with sin. God is not pleased when He has to punish and discipline. But God is pleased with godliness; He is pleased with experiential sanctification; He is pleased with the production of divine good service; and, He is pleased to give rewards.

That's what Paul is saying. He says, "Do you see how Jesus Christ has humbled Himself? Jesus Christ, as a man has now been exalted." He says, "You do the same. As you have always been positive to the Word of God, I now call upon you to be positive, not only in my presence, but in my absence toward your progressive sanctification. I now call upon you to do this with fear and trembling, lest you should fail at this point of your progress in your Christian life because God is willing to show you what to do, and He's willing to enable you to do it. The result will be fantastic rewards and blessings for you at the Judgment Seat of Christ."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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