



**KING'S
CHURCH**
EDINBURGH

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Total Obedience

Philippians 2:12-18

Jesus was obedient where Israel in the Old Testament were not. Paul is concerned that the Philippians don't fail in the same way (verse 16). He has good cause to hope because they have been doing this so far (12) and because God is at work in them (13).

What does *"work out your salvation with fear and trembling"* mean? Surely we are saved by grace only? Well, our standing with God is based solely on what Christ has done on our behalf. Our good works could contribute nothing to this. This same grace motivates us and equips and empowers us now to obey. Grace isn't only the start, it is always at work in the Christian, so that they can live a godly life. We're involved - this is an active thing that we have a responsibility for - but God's grace is decisive. We cannot plead diminished responsibility. 2 Peter 1:3-4 makes this clear.

"Fear and trembling" is the realisation that we're in a hostile world with an aggressive enemy. We cannot be casual. We need to be aware of the circumstances that make us more vulnerable. Cruise control is fine on the open road but completely inappropriate for hazardous terrain. So many Christians have wrecked their lives because of their complacency.

"Your salvation" is plural - Paul isn't talking about individual lives but the whole community. We work it out together - encouraging and challenging one other. God has decided that this is the best way to do this.

In case there was any doubt that we're moving away from a grace foundation as we talk about our efforts, Paul reminds us again in 13 that God is the one ultimately making this happen. The Spirit of God is in us, working and changing and motivating

us. When we feel lacking in this, we must ask the Spirit to fill us again with Himself. This is a process - we have more of Him in us as He confirms us to Himself, and we actually then find ourselves more aware of our need for Him.

Our obedience makes us shine like light in the darkness.

Questions:

- Why is joyless obedience unsatisfactory to God and inappropriate for us?
- Why is it important for us to understand our standing in God as we consider obedience?
- In what areas of life do you find obedience to God especially hard at the moment?
- How do we cooperate with God in this? What does it actually look like? (Have you got examples of how God has done in you to share as an illustration?)
- How can you as a small group work out your (plural) salvation?
- We live in a culture fixated on obeying itself and its instincts but this is something totally different.
- How can we explain this to people around us who don't understand it?



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