I invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Philippians, **Philippians**

**2**, and I want to continue to look at what we began considering last Lord's Day. I did not

put a title on this last time and the title of this very simply is "Christian Living 101," and

last Sunday was part 1, this will be part 2. Christian Living 101. And I don't know that we

could be considering a more practical subject matter for our Christian lives today than to

understand how sanctification or the pursuit of godliness works out in our lives.

I want to begin by reading the passage. Last time we looked at verse 12, today we will

look at verse 13, but I want to read them together as a cluster and in reality they form one

long sentence. The Apostle Paul writes to the church at Philippi:

*12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence****, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure****.*

There is a passage in the New Testament that if we need understanding regarding how

our Christian life functions, this text would be on that short list. **Now this passage is one**

**of the most important passages in the entire Bible on the subject of *sanctification,* which is our progressive, daily, spiritual growth over the whole of our Christian life.**

One major commentator writes about these two verses, "Sanctification is nowhere made

as explicit as here." And by explicit this word means something that is made precisely

and clearly known. The word explicit means that which is readily observable. That is

what we have in these two verses. **Here the truth of sanctification is *explicit***. It is

precisely and clearly explained to us and here the biblical teaching about our progressive

growth in Christ's likeness is made readily observable. What we have here is Paul's

teaching to the Philippians on Christian living made explicit.

**Philippians 2:12-13: Our Sanctification**

In chapter 1 of this book, the Apostle Paul has already said, "For me to live is Christ,"

and he has already said in chapter 1 that, *"I charge you to live in a manner worthy of your*

*calling."* And so the question is raised no doubt in the mind of the Philippians, "So how

do I live for Christ? And how do I live in a manner worthy of my calling? How do I make

this work in my Christian life?" **And so what Paul gives us in these two verses is perhaps**

**the best synopsis of sanctification to be found anywhere in the Bible, and the unique**

**contribution that we have in these verses is the necessary balance in Christian living.**

The tendency is to go in one of two extremes and emphasize one to the exclusion of the

other, and what is so wonderful about these two verses is that it puts its arms around the

whole. And when we go off into extremes, **one extreme, far right in the Christian life, is**

***legalism* which says that the Christian must keep man-made rules that are found nowhere**

**in the Bible**. Legalism is Phariseeism. Legalism is hyper-law. It is a performance-based

religion without any heart of love for God. Legalism is on the far right and it is a

deathblow to Christianity. There is no life in legalism. There is no spiritual growth where

there is legalism. It has the stench of death upon it.

**On the other end of the spectrum, far left, is what we can call *license*, and by license we**

**mean a free pass to live however you want to live, just love Jesus**. But there are no

guardrails on the side of the narrow path. License is antinomianism, which means against

the law or without law, meaning that there's no sense of obedience to the word of God,

just love Jesus. It is hyper-grace. It is passivity on steroids. License diminishes any sense

of urgency to obey the moral law of God and it discounts the imperatives in the New

Testament which command us to move out in compliance to what God requires. And

license abuses Christian liberty.

**Those are the two extremes on either end of the spectrum; and there is a great tendency in different movements and different churches to emphasize one at the exclusion of the other, and what is necessary is *balance*, and we see that laid out in this passage**.

Perhapsno other two verses in the Bible tucked so closely together provide such a perspective ofthe heads and tails of the same coin, the morning and evening of the same day. In verse 2,we have our responsibility to work, to work at the Christian life, to work at sanctification,and as soon as I say that, there are many people who just begin to perspire and feelnervous whenever they hear that they are told to work at their Christian life. But that is

what we see in verse 12, and there is no spiritual growth for those who are spiritual couch

potatoes and who are lazy in the Christian life and who have disconnected themselves

from the spiritual disciplines of the Christian life. For them, Bible study is just optional.

You're a legalist if you say, "I have to study my Bible every day and read my Bible, or be

in prayer, or be in church." They want to cry, "Foul! Legalism!" And that is why they are

spiritual pygmies and their lives are going nowhere with the Lord.

**Our Sanctification: *Our* Role and *God’s* Role**

So verse 12 says work, **work out your salvation**. Roll up your sleeves, put your shoulder

to the plow. Commit yourselves to spiritual disciplines. Discipline yourself for the

purpose of godliness. Get off the couch. Get into the game. Get into the weight room.

Begin to pump some iron and get after it with God. Laziness is a millstone around the

neck of any believer. That is in verse 12, but in verse 13, which we will look at in just a

little bit, is God's responsibility and **God's part to also work**, to work in us, to enable us to

do the work that we are supposed to do. And what I want us to see is that God is at work

in verse 13 in us, in no way negates our responsibility to work, in fact, it's just the

opposite. Because God is at work in our lives, he produces work in us; and if you're not

working at your sanctification, there is a serious disconnect in your spiritual life because

God is working and for some reason there is a short circuit in the wires in your spiritual

life because where God is at work, it is intended to produce work in us. And so that is

what we see in these two verses that come together.

***Our* Role in Our Sanctification Has Four Parts**

Now I want to just quickly remind us of verse 12 that we looked at last time together, and

I gave you one major Roman numeral heading, I. for verse 12, our work in sanctification,

our activity in sanctification, and I drew four subheadings to your attention, and some of

you after the service were amazed I did not alliterate them. I've had a week to do that and

they shall now be alliterated, alright? Your pen will be able to write this so much easier.

It'll be more pleasing to your eye to feast upon this alliteration.

**Our Role, Part 1: The *People* of Sanctification**

**So *first* is the people, the *people* of sanctification**. Notice how verse 12 begins, *"So then,*

*my beloved."* We need to understand that this is addressed to Christians only. It has

nothing to do with unbelievers and if you miss this, you're going to totally misinterpret

the word of God and you will falsely assume that Paul is saying to unbelievers to work

for their salvation; that you have to earn your way to heaven. **This is not delivered to any**

**mailbox where an unbeliever is living. This is addressed to "my beloved."**

Now God has a general love for all mankind but he has a special love for his elect, and he

has a special love for his own people that is far deeper and richer than his general love for

all mankind, and that is why we are referred to as the beloved. Unbelievers are never

referred to as the beloved. Beloved here speaks of the intimacy and the personal love

relationship that exists between God and his own chosen people.

**Our Role, Part 2: The *Path* of Salvation**

***Second*, not only the people but the *path***. We saw the word obeyed, *"just as you have*

*always obeyed."* This is the path of sanctification. Every step forward in the Christian life

is a step of obedience, and any step of disobedience leads to backsliding, it leads off the

track, it leads backwards to lose gained ground. The path to move forward in the

Christian life is exclusively on the narrow path of obedience and, in fact, **every Christian,**

**every true, blood-bought believer who is in the body of Christ, their life is characterized by obedience.** Notice he says, *"just as you have always obeyed."* From day one, from themoment you came into the kingdom of God, you immediately began living in obedienceto the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Then he goes on to say, *"not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence."*

They are so connected to God that Paul doesn't have to be in town in order for them to

live their Christian lives. Their eyes are not to be on Paul. Their eyes are to be on the

Lord Jesus Christ and they can't use that as a trump card for an excuse that they can't

obey the Lord anymore because Paul is out of town. No, he says, *"You have always*

*obeyed. You began in my presence when I was with you, and when I am not with you,*

*nothing has changed. You continued down this path of obedience."*

And I want you to hear me clearly say this day**: obedience is absolutely, non-negotiable in**

**your Christian life, and if you live out of obedience to God, there will be a price to pay**

**for that.** There will be consequences to sin. *"Whatsoever a man sows, that will he also*

*reap."* And it will also invite divine discipline in our lives that is painful to bring us back

to the path of obedience. And anytime you hear any Christian author or speaker at a

conference diminish or downplay the role of obedience in the Christian life, you need to

run out of the building, put your fingers in your ear, cover your eyes, and no longer hear

what that person has to say because it will be in direct contradiction to the word of God.

**Our Role, Part 3: The *Perspiration* of Salvation**

**So Paul says the path of sanctification is compliance to the written word of God, and then *third*, the *perspiration***. There you have it, the perspiration of sanctification. You thought I couldn't do it. I just slam-dunked it, okay? The perspiration. Work out your salvation. Itcould not be any more clear, black print on white paper. There's no other spin to put onthis ball, there's no other angle to hold your Bible to try to get it to read some other way.We are commanded to work out our salvation.

You need to know that this is an imperative verb, meaning it is a command, and this word

*"work out"* means to work thoroughly at something, and to take pains in working at it.

Listen, there is no easy path to maturity. There is no easy way to grow in the grace and

knowledge of God. Let go and let God is found nowhere in the Bible. We must work out

our salvation, it means to expend energy and to exert our effort to get off the couch, to get

onto our knees, to get before an open Bible, and as we live our Christian lives, to resist

temptation, to fight the good fight, to buffet our body, to discipline ourselves for

godliness. Listen, the Christian life is a call to action, it is a call to work**, it is a call to put**

**our shoulder to the plow and to press on in the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.** It is

not a call just to sit back. It is to press on.

And when he says *"work out your salvation,"* we said God has already worked it in in

regeneration, we work it out in sanctification. **God has already put it in us, we now work**

**it out.** And the word salvation here is really synonymous with sanctification. The Bible

speaks of salvation in three ways, past, present, future. Justification, sanctification,

glorification. The reference here is to sanctification and it is a call to perspiration. In fact,

one of the verbs that is used in the New Testament that exhorts us as believers is a Greek

word,’ agonizomai’, to agonize, to expend blood, sweat, toil and tears in pushing against

the resistance of this evil world system, and fighting our way through the kingdom of

darkness as we live in this world and guard our hearts. All of this is a part of "work

out your salvation."

**Our Role, Part 4: The *Prompting* of Salvation**

**Then finally, *fourth*, the *prompting*, the prompting of sanctification.** What is to be the

motive? What is to be the force that is pushing us to work out our salvation? And he says

*"with fear and trembling."* Those are strong words. Certainly it includes reverential awe

for God, no doubt, and it does not mean dread of God. **But what is communicated here to**

**us is that we must take God very seriously in our Christian lives and in our spiritual lives to the point that there is not just simply fear but fear to the point of trembling.** You canread it for yourself right there in your own Bible and this is recorded in the book that isknown for its joy. The book of Philippians is the letter of joy but the joy that we have in

the Lord grows out of the soil of fear and trembling. It is the idea that we are so blood

earnest in our Christian life that there is nothing casual here, nothing kicked back,

nothing, just laid back, but it is a call to take the pursuit of holiness very seriously.

Let me ask you this morning: is there fear and trembling in your heart regarding your

working out your salvation? Does this sound strange to you to read this in your Bible?

This should truly grip our hearts and this does not discount the peace of God that

surpasses all comprehension. This does not discount, *"Rejoice in the Lord always, again I*

*say rejoice."* It's not either/or, it's both/and. But if we have a Christian life that only seeks

joy and happiness and there's no room for fear and trembling, there's going to be very

little spiritual growth. God will just be an addendum to your life, an add-on for you to use

for your own purposes. How this should grip our hearts, "God, I want to work out my

sanctification as You have worked it into my life."

***God’s* Role in Our Salvation Has Five Parts**

Now I did not mean to take that long for the review but it was a blessing to my heart at

least to go back through that. **Now second, not only our work in sanctification, now**

**second, *God's* work in sanctification.** That is verse 13 and Paul now proceeds to God's

work as we work out our salvation. Now I have five subheadings that I want to set before

you and you know my practice, I am so committed to the word of God that I just want to

move phrase by phrase, at times word by word through a sentence even in the order in

which it is written, and so I want to take us now through verse 13 and I want to give you

five subheadings that I think will serve as lenses to help you see what is in verse 13. It

will follow the adverb type of outline: ***who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why* and *how***.

**God’s Role, Part 1: The *Who***

**First of all, the who. Notice how verse 13 begins, *"for it is God."* That is the *who*.** That is

the one who is working in our lives, it is God. And when he says God here, the reference

is to God the Father. As you look at Philippians 2, it becomes very clear the distinction

between God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Both are God but the word God here refers to

God the Father, not God the Son. That distinction began in verse 6, *"who, [Christ] existed*

*in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,"* then in verse

9, *"For this reason also, God highly exalted Him."* God is God the Father. Him is God the

Son. Then in verse 11, *"that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the*

*glory of God the Father."* You see?

**God is God the Father and what I want us to understand is God the Father is the primary worker in your sanctification.** He will use the agency of God the Holy Spirit and he willuse the instrumentality of the word of God, but God the Father has not walked off the

project. It was God the Father who sent the Son and sent the Holy Spirit to bring about

our salvation and once we entered into the kingdom of heaven, God the Father has not

dusted his hands and left it to be worked out by the other two members of the Godhead.

God the Father will now complete what he began. In fact, that's what he says in

Philippians 1:6, *"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in*

*you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."* That "He" is not Christ Jesus. There's a

distinction in Philippians 1:6 between Christ Jesus and He, the He refers to God the

Father who was mentioned earlier in verse 3.

So what is important for us is to have the right understanding of how our sanctification is

being worked out. ***God*** is the primary worker. ***God*** is the author of our sanctification.

***God*** is the source. ***God*** is the supplier of our sanctification and what an encouragement

this must have been to the Philippians to hear that they were not on their own in the

Christian life; that they weren't given simply a list of imperative commands and moral

law and God saying, "Get after it and do it in your own strength." How this must have

encouraged them to know that everything that God has called them to do and holds them

responsible to do, God will enable them to bring it to pass. And so here we see the who, it

is God the Father.

**God’s Role, Part 2: The *What***

**Now second, I want you to see the *what*.** We would ask what is God doing? It continues

to read, *"for it is God who is at work."* That's the what. **That's *what* God is doing, God is**

**at work**. Now this verb for work, it's really a participle, is in the present tense. That's

important and what it means is God is working every moment of every day in your

Christian life. God never takes a day off. There's no sabbatical for God in your Christian

life. God is constantly, ever and always at work in your Christian life and many times it

will not feel like God is at work in my life, and it may even feel like the Psalm that I read

earlier, "God, where are You? God, You have rejected us. God, You seem a long way

away." Nevertheless, God is always on duty, God is always at work, he is constantly

relentlessly at work in our lives to bring about our spiritual maturity. In fact, it's even an

active voice meaning God is not passive in this.

God is dynamically at work and this word for *"work"* is used twice in this verse. The first

here is God's work in us, the second is the work that he produces. *"Work*" was also used

in verse 12 in an intensified form but it's all the same root word. Everything about verses

12 and 13 is about work. **There's no sitting. There's no spectating. There's no passivity in verses 12 and 13. Everything is about God's work and our work together in the Christian life.**

This word for *"work,"* I told you last time, is a Greek word. I'm gonna pronounce it

because you can hear the English word in it, ‘*energeo*’, energy. God is energetic. God is

full of energy. God is always energetically working in our Christian lives. He is never

inactive. He is always active. He is always involved. He is always engaged. And we hear

that in John 15:1, Jesus said, *"I am the true vine and My Father is the vinedresser,"* and

we are to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ who is the vine, but by this metaphor God the

Father is our vinedresser who is continually lifting us up to greater exposure to the sun,

who is continually pruning us and removing those things from our lives that are pulling

us away from spiritual growth and maturity. **God is *ever* and *always* at work in our**

**Christian lives.** He began it when he called us into the kingdom, when he regenerated us,

but that wasn't the end, that was really just the beginning.

Now you and I need to be mindful that God the Father right now presently in your

spiritual life is energetically actively working. None of us are islands unto ourselves,

separated from God. God is intimately acquainted with everything that is going on in our

lives from the inside out. He is like the ***potter*** who is shaping us and molding us into the

image of Christ. He is like the ***farmer*** who is cultivating the soil of our heart so that the

word of God will spring forth and grow more fervently. God is upholding us, and he is

sustaining us, and he is **encouraging** us, and he is **convicting** us, and he is **challenging** us,

and he is **comforting** us. God is doing all of these things in our spiritual lives. He is

illumining our understanding. He is granting repentance. He is enlarging our faith. He is

removing what is ungodly and he is fostering that which is Christ-like.

***God* has to be doing this or we would never grow one iota in our spiritual lives**. I mean,

we would all be just like a computer but that it's not plugged into the source of power.

We would just be like a glove but there's no hand in the glove to operate and to move the

glove. God has to be at work in our lives. In John 15:5 Jesus said, *"apart from Me you*

*can do nothing."* You can do nothing. God has to be at work in our spiritual lives if we

are to grow and advance. Say, do you realize if you're a believer this morning God is at

work in your life? And he is in your life for good? And he is in your life to bring about a

desired result?

**God’s Role, Part 3: The *Where***

**We've seen the who, we've seen the what, I want you to see the *where***. Note the next two

words as we just work our way through this text, *"for it is God who is at work,"* note the

next two words*, "in you."* **Where is God at work? *In you.***

Let's start with the word *"you."* Who is the *"you"?* The *"you*" is the beloved in verse 12

and we can trace the "*you*" all the way back to chapter 1, verse 1, *"all the saints in Christ*

*Jesus who are in Philippi,*" and that extends to every church, into every continent, in

every generation, every true believer. Everyone who is truly a saint, God is at work in

you. God is not at work in only a few believers. God is not at work only in those who

reach a certain level of spiritual development. **God is at work in every true Christian.**

So he is at work in you, now note the word "*in*." This could not be any more personal.

The idea is that God is at work inside of you. This is not something superficial that just

lays on the external perimeter of our lives. God is at work in us in the very depths of our

soul. God could not be anymore on the inside of our lives than where he presently has set

up shop to work. He is at work in our ***minds***. He is at work in our ***hearts***. He is at work in

our ***desires***. He is at work in our ***affections***. He is at work in our ***wills***. That is a

comprehensive scope of the working of God inside of us. There's no closet. There's no

back room that is off-limits to God working inside of us. There's no hidden compartment

in our life that is off-limits for God to work. God is at work from the front door to the

back door, from the main floor, to the top floor, to the basement. God is at work from the

roof all the way down to the foundation. **God is at work in every single milli-inch in our**

**lives.**

1 Corinthians 6:19, *"your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you."* Colossians

1:27, *"Christ in you."* **The reference here is to God the Father and in a very real sense the**

**entire Trinity is at work in us, but I do not want us to neglect the present activity and**

**energetic work in sanctification that God the Father is having inside of us. It's the fullness of the Godhead: God the *Father*, God the *Son* and God the *Holy Spirit***. Listen, all threewere involved in our conversion, were they not? That's why when we baptize people webaptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit because it is the

Father who chose his elect, designed the plan of salvation, sent the Son, and sent the

Spirit. It is the Son who came into this world, born of a virgin, to keep the law of God

perfectly, go to a cross, die for the sins of everyone who will believe upon him, propitiate

the righteous anger of God, reconcile sinful man to a holy God. And it is God the Spirit

who now comes and convicts and calls and regenerates. Now that's why we are not one of

these churches that baptizes just in the name of Jesus. **God the Father, God the Son, and**

**God the Holy Spirit, all are involved in our salvation and so it is in our sanctification as**

**well.**

The profundity of this is inscrutable, how actively the entire Godhead is at work inside of

us, and it really ought to be a cause of concern for each one of us here today to walk in a

very circumspect manner knowing that God is so involved. He's a part of every

conversation. He's a part of everything we watch. He's a part of everything that we read.

He is a part of every thought, every fantasy, every dream, every ambition, every act,

every deed no matter who is around looking, not looking. God is actively a participant in

every part of our lives.

**God’s Role, Part 4: The *How***

**Now, number 4, the *how*.** As we continue to work our way through verse 13, *"for it is*

*God who is at work in you,"* and we would ask the question, "So how is God at work in

us?" Note he goes on to say*, "both to will and to work."* **To will and to work, and the idea**

**here is God's will is moving our will and God's working in us is *moving us to work***. God

is the cause, we are the effect, and it is God who is working upon our wills. Listen, our

wills are so weak. We are such weak-willed people. People want to talk about free will?

That's a death sentence. You think far more highly of yourself than you ought to think.

**We need God to be at work to will and influence our will if we are to pursue what is**

**right.** And when he says *"will"* here it takes in the ***desires***, the ***affections***, the ***ambitions***

that we would have. **Martyn Lloyd-Jones** who speaks and writes so precisely regarding

the Christian life in his sermon on Philippians 2:13 writes this and it really bears my

reading this, **"Every good desire, every Christian thought, every Christian aspiration**

**which I have is something that has been produced in me by God. God controls my**

***willing*. It is God who energizes my *desires,* and my *hopes,* and my *aspirations,* and my**

***thoughts*. *God* stimulates it all."** He goes on to say, **"These desires for a fuller, and better, and more perfect Christian life are not self-generated. They are not self-produced. When you have a desire to do something good or a desire to pray, it is *God* who is energizing it in your will. God is bringing his great purpose to pass in our Christian life and by controlling our will, our desires, our thoughts and our aspirations, *God* persuades our will and gives us holy desires."** Legalism says, "It's all me." Keswick view of sanctification is,"It's all me." The Bible view is, "It originates in God."

Now he goes on to say, "*and to work*." **Not only is God's *will* influencing my will, but**

**God's work is influencing my *work*.** He says, *"to will and to work,"* and here's the third

time this word "*work*" is found. The second time in this verse, third time in these two

verses, and I've already said everything about these two verses is all about work. There's

nothing passive here. If we are to grow as a Christian, there must be hard work that is

going on.

**Now this work is *God* causing us to work.** It refers to our work in sanctification. John

Murray, a great theologian of the 20th century, writes this, "**Because *God* works, *we* work.**

***All* working out of salvation on our part is the effect of God working in us."** In other

words, God's work is the **cause**, our work is the **effect**. God's work is the **root**, our work is

the **fruit**. God is a working God; and we're a piece of work, and we are the arena of his

work. We are the construction site of his work, and **God, every day, is at work bringing us**

**along in holiness.**

**John MacArthur** makes a great distinction here, both a negative and a positive. As God is

working, he is giving us a holy discontent of those things that we need to let go, those

things that are holding us back, those things that are polluting our spiritual lives. God is

giving us a holy discontent and at the same time he is also giving us holy aspirations for

that which we must have to grow. He is increasing our aspirations, our holy aspirations

for the word of God, for prayer, for Christian fellowship, for meditation on the word of

God, for corporate worship, for private worship, for fellowship with other believers and

to carry out ministry. **That is God at work in our soul, increasing our holy aspirations**

**while at the same time giving us holy dissatisfaction with those things that are off-limits or hold us back from our spiritual lives.** That is God at work.

As I prepared for this message, I poured through numerous commentaries and numerous

theologians to really dig and to get to the bottom of this and I want to read just a couple

of these. You'll recognize most of these names. This is almost just a momentary

parenthesis just for you to stop taking notes and to listen to these other towering, gifted

giants that God has given to the church to instruct the church over the centuries.

**Matthew Henry**. Everyone ought to have access to Matthew Henry. Matthew Henry

writes at this point, "**God gives the whole ability. It is the grace of God which inclines the**

**will to that which is good and then enables us to perform it. To will and to work.**" And by the way, it's always in that order. First the will, then the work. First he gives us the desire,

then he gives us the dynamic.

**Albert Barnes**, great commentator from the 19th century writes, "**God works in their hearts that which is agreeable to Him or leads them to will and to do that which is in accordance with His own will**." Now what is important about that piece of the puzzle is it would beeasy for someone to hear me preach this sermon and come to a fatalistic view, "Well,God's just at work in my life and God is doing it, therefore there is no reason for me to beenergetic in my Christian life." Wrong. God is not working the sin in your life. God is not

the author of iniquity in your life. That's at your feet. That's at my feet. God is only

working that which is in accordance to his will, bringing about the desired result that God

desires to see in our spiritual lives.

**James Montgomery Boice** writes, "**The same God who is in us to will also works through**

**that will to do according to His good pleasure**."

And **William Hendriksen**, the great commentator writes, "**God causes them to work out**

**their salvation yet without destroying their responsibility or self-activity."**

**So, we see that God is at work in you both to *will* and to *work*.** **It's an *inside* job**.

**God’s Role, Part 5: The *Why***

**Finally, I want you to see the *why*.** Note the last four words of verse 13. Here is why God

is at work. Here is why God is working so that we will work out our salvation. Note, *"for*

*His good pleasure."* God does this because God wants to do this. God does this because

God loves holiness and because God hates sin. God does this because God loves

conformity to his Son Jesus Christ, and God hates the spirit of this world. **God does this**

**work in us in sanctification for *his* good pleasure.** It brings great pleasure to God to see us

grow like flowers that are rooted and grounded in his grace. It brings great pleasure to

God to see the image, his image restored in us. It brings great pleasure to God to see the

image of his Son brought to bear in our lives. It brings great pleasure to God. Do you

know what? **It should bring great pleasure to *us* as well**.

All that God does he does for his own pleasure and so God is at work in us not

begrudgingly, but with greatest pleasure to bring about the desired result. And from this

we can safely infer that God works to effect our obedience, because obedience pleases

God; therefore, disobedience displeases God. Likewise, God works in us so that we will

be working out our salvation because it pleases God, and our negligence to work out our

salvation and sanctification displeases God. Moreover, our fear and trembling pleases

God, and our lukewarm approach to Christian living displeases God. **Thus, the extent to**

**which God is working in us is restricted to that which brings him good pleasure**. All sin

displeases him. All holiness brings him great pleasure.

**This is *God's* work in sanctification and it is never independent of *our* work in**

**sanctification, and because God is working, therefore we work in sanctification**. And

wherever you see someone who is not working in their sanctification, you can be assured

of one of two things. 1. Either they are not a believer and do not have God in their lives

because if God is in their lives, God 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, will be working to

bring about the desired result of growth in godliness. That's option #1. The other option is

God is in their life and God is working mightily in their life but there is a serious flaw in

their spiritual life; there is a serious disconnect, the short wiring of the wires, and

somehow, someway what God is doing in that person's life is not converting into them

working out their sanctification. And that should be cause for serious self-examination

and a cause for serious inward inspection to see God, "Why am I not growing as I ought

to be growing in my spiritual life? If You are working, why am I not working? God, if

You are so incessantly energetic, why have I slowed down? Why have I become passive?

Why have I become less than what You desire me to be to work out my sanctification

through obedience in fear and trembling?"

**As I conclude this message, a word to those of us who are *believers* first**. What a glorious

thing it is to live the Christian life. God could have just saved us and given us a shove in

the right direction and left us on our own. "Hang in there until the end. I'll come get you

at the end." And we could've been just flying solo in the Christian life. But how good and

how gracious of God to actually come live inside of us, and not only to live inside of us

as a mere spectator or observer or occasional incliner of us in the right direction, but that

God is incessantly working energetically to bring about our sanctification. Let us be

reminded not only is there the transcendence of God, that God is high and lifted up, he is

exalted above the heavens as we just sang, but God is also imminent. There is the

imminence of God, that he is close and he is near, he is inside of his beloved, and he is

helping us work out from the depths of our being that which he has worked into us.

So if you're a believer here today and I would assume that most of us are, be encouraged.

You're not on your own. God is with you. Better than that, God is in you to bring this

about.

**If you're an *unbeliever* here today and you've never been converted, I cannot think**

**of anything more dreadful or boring than to try to live the Christian life without God in**

**me**. It really will become a performance treadmill and what's so frustrating is you'll never

be good enough. You can never achieve or attain. You're like a man in quicksand, the

more you exert energy, the faster you are sinking and you can't reverse the cycle. Nothing

more frustrating than the one who tries to live the Christian life without God in their

lives. If you have never believed upon Jesus Christ, I have no idea what's going on in

your mind and in your heart right now. I don't know if you've been with us for 10 years or

for 10 minutes, but if you're at that point where you know you cannot continue to go on

like this, that you cannot continue to try to live a way to impress other people and you

have no reality in your own heart and soul, you're just empty on the inside, you're

bankrupt, why continue to live in denial of this? Why continue to just put off like you

would put off going to a doctor to be made well? Why not come to the Great Physician

today? Why not say to him, "Lord, save me. I'm a sinner. I'm a great sinner. You are a

great Savior. I call upon You this very moment, come into my life, cleanse me, wash me,

begin the process now of sanctifying me and making me what You desire me to be on the

inside." You need God in your life to do this. May God give you faith to call upon his

name even today.