

TO LIVE IS CHRIST

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

The Great Christian Workout!

There is great emphasis in our world today to have the ‘motivation and mindset’ needed to maintain a healthy physical lifestyle. While healthy physical lifestyles are important, even more important is a healthy spiritual lifestyle that comes to us through The Great Christian Workout!

Before we examine The Workout, let’s begin by making sure that we understand what the ‘workout’ is NOT.

The Great Christian Workout is NOT working FOR our salvation.

Salvation is Free!

Read Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV) ⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,* ⁹ *not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

There is nothing that I can say to make it any plainer. Our salvation is a gift. If we could work for our salvation human nature being what it is, we would be boasting about it.

Salvation is not a gift that will disappear.

Read John 10:28-30 (ESV) ²⁸ *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.* ²⁹ *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.* ³⁰ *I and the Father are one.”*

Jesus said he would not lose even one person whom the Father had given Him. Anyone who makes a sincere commitment to believe in Jesus Christ as Savior is secure in God's promise of eternal life. Christ will not let His people be overcome by Satan and lose our salvation. This is not something I made up. These are the words of Jesus.

Can a person choose to ‘give back’ God’s gift of salvation?

Why would anyone want to give something so wonderful back? But, some get disillusioned at times with life and want to ‘blame’ God. Even, in our discouragement it is not possible ‘give back’ our salvation because of the very nature of God. He is our Savior no matter what and our salvation does not depend on what we ‘feel’ at the moment. **John 1:12-13 (ESV)** ¹² *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,* ¹³ *who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* We come into God’s family because of His will not ours.

Can a person profess the name of Jesus and then walk away?

Read John 6:66 (ESV) ⁶⁶ *After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.*

Since there were those who walked away from Jesus during His earthly ministry, it stands to reason that it can still happen today. Many people profess with their lips the name of Jesus but if there is no ‘heart connection’ their confession is worthless. **Matthew 7:21 (ESV)** ²¹ *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

Now, let’s move on to The Great Christian Workout.

Read Philippians 2:12-14 (ESV) ¹² *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

This is a text that is often misused to instill fear into people, warning that it means that God’s great gift of salvation can be lost. So what did Paul mean when he says: *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*? It makes no sense that Paul would be encouraging believers to live in a continuous condition of nervousness and anxiety based on the need to work for salvation. That would contradict his many other exhortations to peace of mind, courage, and confidence in the God who authors our salvation.

Workout Rule #1 – Give Proper Respect to the Workout

The Greek word translated *fear* in this context can mean reverence or "respect." Paul uses the same phrase when referring to Titus in **2 Corinthians 7:15 (ESV)** ¹⁵ *And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.* It was Paul’s hope that the Corinthians’ reception of Titus would be with great humility and respect for his position as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul said of himself in **1 Corinthians 2:3 (ESV)** ³ *And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.* Paul came to the Corinthians in fear and trembling because he realized the great and awesome nature of the work he was called to do. This leads us to:

Workout Rule #2 – Stick to the Workout

The Philippian Christians needed to be careful to obey Christ, even when Paul was not there to continually remind them about what was right.

When Paul says, *work out your own salvation* he was NOT advocating salvation by works. Notice Paul was telling the Philippians to work **out** their salvation not to work **for** their salvation. Paul is writing about the Philippians carrying out to completion what has already begun in them. Connect the thought of verse 12 back to **Philippians 1:6 (ESV)** ⁶ *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

In *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren relates the concept of working out our salvation to a physical workout. Warren said when we exercise, we are not trying to get muscles, instead we are trying to

develop and strengthen the muscles we already have. Paul's letter to the Philippians is not an evangelistic appeal to lost people but instead a letter of challenge and comfort to believers.

Workout Rule #3 – Don't Add to God's Workout Plan

It is easy to 'fall into the trap' of thinking that we need to 'add something' to what Jesus has already done. Human additions to God's salvation plan sometimes include water baptism as a salvation requirement, administering of the last rites at death, membership in a particular denomination, or even living a Christian life. Adding requirements to 'assist God' in saving us is **not** biblical.

However, even though our works do not save us, let's never forget that our faith and our works go hand in hand. James, the half brother of Jesus, explains this way: **James 2:20 (ESV)** ²⁰ *Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?*

Workout Rule #4 – Don't Grumble While Working Out

Read Philippians 2:14-15 (ESV) ¹⁴ *Do all things without grumbling or disputing,* ¹⁵ *that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.*

Paul warns about griping and complaining. I have said many times that if we say we are doing something 'for the Lord' and are mad or grumbling about doing it – we might as well not do it! A whole generation of Israelites wandered in the wilderness and never entered the Promised Land. That 'lost' generation was known for its grumbling. **Numbers 16:41 (ESV)** ⁴¹ *But on the next day all the congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and against Aaron....* "The word translated as grumbling in **Philippians** and **Numbers** is described as the low, threatening, behind-the-back, discontented muttering of a mob who distrusts their leaders and is on the verge of an uprising. F.A. Noble said, "Murmuring Christians are seldom of any use in the cause of Christ."

Paul warns against even slight dissensions among the church fellowship. This reminds me that Sunday School and small group studies should always be places where positive words are spoken. People are NOT attracted to Christ and Christianity when 'born again' believers gripe and complain more than non-Christians. Christ followers are supposed to be different – called out for service to God. We should never allow group Bible studies to turn into forums for griping and complaining. Grumbling at home and in the workplace should be avoided as well. *Do all things without grumbling or disputing.*

The Apostle John wrote of a man named Demetrius who obviously excelled in his Christian workout. Only one thing is said about him in the entire Bible and it is this: *Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true. (3 John 1:12)* To receive a good testimony from everyone – what a blessing! Just think! We grow spiritually when we let go of the whining, griping, and complaining!

God's children are to *shine as lights in the world*. I like how the NIV puts it: *stars in the universe*. McGee says, "Be like a light. When we go out at night we see the stars up there. When God looks down on this dark world, He sees those who are His own as little lights down here."

We are to be stars of the universe *in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation*. To me one of the saddest things in our twisted generation is that professed Christians are often undistinguishable from the children of darkness around us. Instead we should be as Peter described in **1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)**⁹ *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

Workout Rule #5 – Stay Connected to the Great Physician for Workout Health

Read Philippians 2:16 (ESV)¹⁶ *holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.*

It is likely that the *word of life* is a reference to Jesus similar to one John made in **1 John 1:1 (ESV)**¹ *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— Jesus is the Word of Life!* The *day of Christ* is when Jesus returns. Paul wanted to be able to point to the Philippians as a 'success story' when He stood before Christ. Paul wanted to be proud of his children in the faith at Philippi – NOT being grumblers but points of light. If that happened, Paul's work would not be for nothing.

Workout Rule #6 – Drink in Plenty of the Water of Life in Order to Have Spiritual Water to Pour Out

Read Philippians 2:17-18 (ESV)¹⁷ *Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.*¹⁸ *Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.*

In Jewish worship practices, the drink offering accompanied the sacrifice - but the drink offering was not the actual sacrifice. Jesus is the only sacrifice that can ever be worthy. Paul knew that his drink offering added to and complimented the actual sacrifice. Paul also mentioned this type of sacrifice in **2 Timothy 4:6 (ESV)**⁶ *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.* Paul's sacrifice was martyrdom for the cause of Christ. What have we sacrificed for the Savior?

Workout Rule #7 – FOJ – Focus On Jesus – Not the Workout!