

## A Fine Balance

### Scripture Reading — Philippians 2:12-13

*My dear friends, as you have always obeyed . . . continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. — Philippians 2:12*

People are sometimes confused by these verses in Philippians, thinking that they imply we are saved by our good deeds rather than by God's grace through faith. Are we saved by grace or by good works?

We are saved by the grace of God, which shows itself when we produce good works, the evidence of God's work in us. (See also Paul's explanation in Ephesians 2:8-10.)

Here, in Philippians, Paul reminds his readers of the importance of obedience, which can sound like a "work-your-way-to-heaven" scheme. But it's not. Paul immediately goes on to say that the good works we do are enabled by God. So it's all by grace, and yet we are responsible to do something too, in response.

When Paul urges his readers to "work out" their salvation, he means doing the logical follow-through of having received grace. He does not say we "create" our own salvation. We just keep working it out, following the lead of God's Spirit working in us because we have been made new through grace.

It is easy to slide into an either/or mistake. We might think grace gives us an excuse to live however we want, if we are forgiven anyway. Or we might ignore grace and try to work furiously to earn God's favor. But salvation is all by grace, and our response is obedience, through God's ongoing work in us. It's a fine balance, and a holy one too.

### Prayer

*Make our minds able to understand your salvation and what it means, O Lord, to live every moment for you. In Jesus, Amen.*

**Devotion topics:** [Obedience](#), [Christianity](#), [Salvation](#), [Discipleship](#), [Grace](#)

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