

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Penrith

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ENCOURAGEMENT LETTER – 16JAN25

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How are you today? I am thankful for God's creative beauty in the thunderstorm – the roiling dark clouds, the sizzle of the lightning, the deep boom of thunder rolling through the heavens. We enjoyed standing on the porch yesterday evening watching the storm.

Today our encouragement is "Anticipation – The Work of God in You" before heading on to church matters.

ENCOURAGEMENT: Anticipation – The Work of God in You

What New Year resolution did you make? It is that time of year when we resolve to do better at life, to be better people, to have better habits. It is usually not long before our good intentions are left unresolved, except for a few focused individuals. Is that what it is like for your relationship with God? You want to work harder at your Christian life, but find yourself failing. You want to be a better Christian, but you find that you lose motivation. The good news is – God does not quit on you.

Last week we talked about anticipating God's work as we pray. Today we look at God's work in us. Paul writes to the Philippians,

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Philippians 2:12-13

Paul encourages the Philippians to continue to work out their salvation. Notice it says "work out your salvation" not "work for their salvation". Salvation has already been gifted to them freely in Christ Jesus. Their works will never secure their salvation, it is Christ's work that has gained salvation. Rather in those who have been gifted with salvation they are to work out their salvation.

What does "working out your salvation" look like? It is like being gifted with a new, modern top of the range car. Knowing how to drive you know how to get the car moving, but there is more to "work out" to drive the car to its best performance. How to use the cruise control, how to use the air conditioning,

how the onboard navigation works, how to interpret the lights on the dash board, how to sync the onboard systems with your phone, how to use the reversing camera, how to drive with the integrated safety features. There is a process involved in working out how to drive the car in the best way possible. It is similar with our salvation. Christ gifts us with salvation, so now we work out our salvation – how do we grow in Christlikeness, how does the Spirit’s presence help us, how do we live by faith, what does it mean to worship God, how do we serve God and others, how do we wait for the return of Christ, how do we grow in our relationship with God, what does it mean to be part of the church. We are to work out our salvation and all it means for how we live our lives. This will be expressed in faith and obedience.

But this is not something we do without help. Rather we work out our salvation in response to the work of God in us. Paul says “it is God who works in you”. He is present in your life bringing his power and purpose to bear upon you through the Spirit who lives in you. He is like the car expert who sits in the passenger seat of a car helping you to work out what the car can do, even more than that, because he is not just an adviser, but it actively steering the car and making it move. So the Spirit works in us to make us what he wants us to be. He works in us to will and to act according to his good purpose. He works in us in such a way to will – that is to choose to live according to his good purpose – and to act – that is to actually live God’s way. The reason the Philippians can work out their salvation is they know that God is working in them. They can anticipate that God will grow them in their salvation.

We too can anticipate God’s work in us to grow us in the salvation he has gifted us with in Christ. We can anticipate that God will transform and move us increasingly to live in a way that pleases him. So as we stand at the beginning of the year, should we not anticipate that God will work in our lives? And if we believe this, should it not be seen in how we live – trusting in his promises to us in Christ, seeking to live in step with the Spirit, reading his word, praying to him? If we believe that God is working us, then we will seek to live according to his power and purpose and anticipate to see his work in us. What are you trusting God to work in you this year?

FINAL COMMENTS

I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16

As always, love and prayers, Steve.