

## *"The Work of God and the Trembling of Man" Part 1*

### **Holiness**

The Rev. Ted Wood

Philippians 2:12-13

October 23, 2015

**Ted:** O God, the King eternal, whose light divides the day from the night and turns the shadow of death into morning, drive far from us all wrong desires. Incline our hearts to keep Your law and guide your feet into the way of peace, that having done Your will with cheerfulness during the day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give You thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Ted:** Well, the topic—and I'm following Bruce's direction on this—is the whole issue of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. And as you'll see in your outline, I have it subtitled "The Thoughts On Who Accomplishes Salvation, Sanctification and Glorification, and How," or more generally, "The Working of God and the Trembling of Man." And I'm going to talk about the working of God today and the trembling of man next week, and tackle this difficult issue.

I will tell you that usually I prepare all my preparations for clients or for preaching or teaching, always done at the last minute. I don't function well with a lot of lead time. (*Laughter.*) I mean, everybody is wired differently. I invariably get an administrative assistant who wants everything done well in advance. And I handed it to her as I was going into the meeting, and I said, "Can you type this up and get me a hundred copies?" And, of course, they don't like that.

But I started on this one early because it's such a difficult subject. And I will tell you that I was struggling with this for days. And I had the pieces, but they wouldn't come together.

And so I was in Franklin, Pa. Wednesday night. And I hadn't eaten all day, so I was very hungry, and it was my first night that I had spent there with a new client, and I'm looking for a place to eat. And they said, "Well, there's a Subway down Liberty Street." I think the main drag of Franklin is Liberty. And I went looking for the Subway and I went around the block several times. And of course, like my wife—I say to my wife, "Where's the mayonnaise?", and she says, "It's right in front of you in the refrigerator," and I'm looking straight at it and it's not there. I think there's a scientific reason for that. (*Laughter.*) But I'm quite serious. They've done studies. Men have a different way of perceiving things than women do. But that's no surprise to you. (*Laughter.*)

I drove by it several times. It was my last night to get prepared. I had to get the document to Sig to run off the outline. And I said to the Lord, "Lord, help me! This is not coming together. I have eight to ten pages of notes, and none of them are coming together. I've never been so stumped in a long time."

And as I'm driving, circling the block, in Franklin, Pa., looking for something to eat, the Lord says to me, "Well, maybe you ought to fast." (*Laughter.*)

**Participant:** Was it audible?

## *"The Work of God and the Trembling of Man" Part 1*

**Ted:** It was not audible. But it was a strong impression and it was a godly impression, because I was very hungry at the time and I hadn't eaten all day. For lunch I'd had a salad, so I was very hungry.

And I said, "Well, okay. That's just an impression. I'm going to go to the Subway anyway." (*Laughter.*) "I'll just have the six-inch tuna with hot peppers on it," which I love, with white mayo.

And the Lord laid it on me again. He said, "Well, maybe you ought to fast and give up this meal so you'll get some more clarity on what you're going to say."

So I finally found a place to park. I walked through a back alley to the main street. And I'm walking to the Subway and it struck me once again. "Maybe you ought to fast." And I turned around and went back to the room I was staying in. And this is the result of what came out of it. That's not to say that it's God-given or anything, but nonetheless, this has been a tough one, the thoughts to put together on who accomplishes salvation, sanctification and glorification, and how.

Okay, the work of God. I think Part 1 is probably "The Work of God." It's probably one of the greatest verses to talk about in this whole issue of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Philippians 2:12 and 13.

*"My beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence, but much more in my absence." So Paul is saying, (paraphrase), "You've always obeyed me. Now I want you to obey me on this point. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure."* I'm stuck up on another translation.

So Paul is saying, *"Here's what I want you to do. I want you to obey me in this one point. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."*

You know, one of the things about Bruce's teaching is that it's very jarring. This is not your standard run-of-the-mill Bible study or teaching. This is something quite different. In fact, some of the teachings that Bruce gives us are so jarring that a number of us leave and don't come back. I mean, he gives us teachings like "think, act, feel." And that's basically that doctrine precedes and drives behavior. And I really believe this is absolutely true. But a lot of us haven't thought about it.

In the past, our thinking about the Lord—our doctrine—was shaped by family, by church, experiences and feelings. But most of the things we believed were unexamined until we sat down under Bruce's teaching.

When we said, "I believe," what we really meant was "I feel," prior to thinking through the "think, act, feel," or doctrine precedes behavior.

Even after conversion, even after we came to the Lord and we were born again, we were too often under inaccurate and faulty teaching, shaped by worldly and human wisdom rather than the wisdom that is from above.

I remember shortly after I was converted in college. I was under the teaching that being a Christian made you happy all the time. (*Laughter.*) And I was in our inter- varsity group that had set up a table at the Student Union and we were handing out tracts and the like. And the local Episcopal priest came by and started to quiz me about my faith.

## *"The Work of God and the Trembling of Man" Part 1*

And I said, "Well, you know, ever since I accepted Jesus I've been happy every day." (*Laughter.*) (*Ted sings*): "Oh, I'm so happy, so very happy! I've got the love of Jesus in my heart."

**Participant:** A-men!

**Ted:** It's a good tune and it applies some of the time. But many of the times it doesn't, because, in fact, that was faulty teaching. I actually ended up at that Episcopal church and that's how I ended up becoming an Anglican in the long run. But that's another story.

Faulty teaching like this. Satan casts his vote. God casts His vote. And you cast the deciding vote. Choosing or making a decision for Jesus as Lord and Savior saves you. Or, as R. C. Sproul says more accurately, "A choice for Jesus never saved anyone."

Too often the preaching or teaching under which we sat begins with man's needs and then God's character and attributes. And I think that this is an important distinction, because we can say that there is no preacher or teacher who says that he doesn't preach the gospel. "Well, we need to find a church that preaches and teaches the Bible." Well, even the most liberal Protestant churches will say that they teach the Bible. There's nothing to be gained in that analysis.

More accurately is where do you start? Do you start with the character of God or the needs of man?

Prior to coming to Brave Men, I had heard sermons on how to get saved, how to be a better husband, how to have a greater prayer life, stories about Bible heroes and lessons to be learned from them. But I had never heard any teaching on the attributes of God. You think about that. Prior to coming here, had you ever heard a series on the attributes of God? Maybe some of you have. I never have.

I've told this story before. I sat here the first time and I thought, "Attributes of God? This is going to be boring." I was electrified! And it has changed the whole way I look at everything.

We find ourselves in a situation, being here, of having to rethink much of what we thought was true about the gospel. Under Bruce's teaching, God puts us into a position of hearing and learning very heavy things. And if you're new to the process, if you're new to the Bible study, and you are concerned that you're not getting it, or it's confusing, or it's too much, just hang in there.

I often like to think about what it must have been like for brand new Christians to sit there and listen to Paul's letter being read for the first time. They're brand new in the faith. They've come to put their trust in Christ. And then Paul unloads on them in the very heavy teaching in Ephesians.

I want to remind you. I am sure that the pastors of that church said to the new believers, "Now you guys can't take this. So now you can go off to coffee hour early. And the rest of us, the ones who are more mature, we'll stay here." Everybody got it. So hang in there if this is difficult for you.

One of the important rethinks that we have to do is about the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. So that's kind of my lead-in to talk about this. And I think that question about God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, it all depends on where you start—man's needs, or God's character and attributes.

## ***"The Work of God and the Trembling of Man" Part 1***

On that question, where do you start? Now what am I really supposed to do? What am I responsible for? And what is God responsible for? Let's start off not with man's needs, but with the character and attributes of God.

From man's side, we get this. *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."* Now what does that mean? What does it mean that we're to work out our salvation with fear and trembling? Now I'm going to deal with this in depth next week.

Jesus said, *"Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, ... teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you."*

Do you want to know what man's responsibility is? "Observing everything that I have commanded you." So therefore it would seem that the Christian--someone who has been born again and is seeking to live a sanctified life—the Christian is responsible for doing at least some of the Old Testament law. We know that Jesus satisfied the entire Old Testament law, and He fulfilled it. But the fact of the matter is that just because He fulfilled it does not mean that we can go and commit adultery or murder, or lie. Those laws still apply.

So you are responsible for at least part of the Old Testament law. And in addition there are about eight hundred other distinct and different commandments in the New Testament. So therefore you are responsible for observing all that Jesus taught and all that's in the New Testament—some eight hundred plus commandments—and at least some of the six hundred thirty commandments in the Old Testament.

Now here's a good example of what it means to be a responsible Christian. I'm taking this from 1 Thessalonians 5:14-22.

Paul writes, *"We urge you, brothers"—here's what he urges the brethren—"admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything. Hold fast to what is good and abstain from every form of evil."*

That is nineteen commandments in nine verses. So the question is how are you doing? How is it working for you? How responsible are you?

It's interesting. In doing some research, in preparation for this talk, I came upon a blog. It's a blog called "City Data Forum." And one of the contributors on this question said, *"I've looked at all one thousand plus commandments in the New Testament. And even when you take away the repetition, there are still eight hundred plus commandments in the New Testament. And they are all 100 per cent doable, because God calls us believers to a higher standard."*

So if you are as righteous as the Scribes and the Pharisees, with six hundred thirty laws, now you've been given another eight hundred! "They are all 100 per cent doable because God calls believers to a higher standard."

Now this is a faulty teaching. But it is a teaching that you find in many, many churches. I would say, "Higher standards than what?" He says that the Christian is called to a higher standard. But a higher standard than what? What is the standard that's

## *"The Work of God and the Trembling of Man" Part 1*

higher? Than what pagans do? We're called to behave and act and be more responsible than pagans are? Well, the fact of the matter is that many pagans are better people and more righteous than we are. They are more responsible than we are. Maybe you are. But there are pagans who are better people than I am.

Do we have a higher standard than the world? Does that mean that we behave better than the world? Is that what the sanctified Christian life is, that to be sanctified and growing in grace means that you will actually act better than the world? Is that what it's all about? I'm not going to answer any of those questions this week, but next week.

Let me just finish up and come back to this, okay? That's man's part. Now here's God's part. *"It is God who works in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure."* And I would say, as you look at these, are these equal parts? Is it kind of both/and?

In fact, we've talked about this in the past in this study. We said that it's really both/and. It's God's part and it's man's part. And I'm asking the question. Is that true?

I stumbled upon an interesting grammatical feature in the Greek from that verse in Philippians. And it's the word *for*. *"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do His good pleasure."* The word "*for*." It's a very simple Greek word. It's the word *gar* in Greek. But I found that it comes from a contraction of two other words. And Bishop Rodgers is nodding. He is probably more aware of this than I am.

But it's a new discovery because the word "*for*", that Greek word *gar*, comes from two Greek words which mean *"for the fact is, namely."*

So in Philippians, the question is what is the fact? Bear with me. In Philippians 2:12-13, what is the fact of those two verses? Well it seems to me that the fact is that *"it is God who works in you both to will and to do His good pleasure."* That's the fact. That's the foundational verse.

So if I were to restate these two verses with that understanding of that Greek word *for*—*gar*—I would write it this way. "The fact is that because God works in you both to will and to work for His own good pleasure, therefore you work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The fact of those two verses is that God is working out His will and purpose in your life. Therefore, from that point on, therefore you can work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

My working is the result of God's working. There is no working in me for sanctification unless God is working. Doctrine precedes behavior, just as Bruce said. That's exactly correct. That's a home run statement. And when applied, it makes a lot of sense and a lot of satisfaction in our lives. Let me just stop. Yes. What were you going to say?

**Participant:** I have a question. Back on your talking about God's sovereignty and the Christian's responsibility. Six hundred thirty Old Testament commandments, eight hundred New Testament commandments. You were just pointing out the fact of a lot of them. But you're not necessarily saying that we have to do these.

**Ted:** Yes. I'm losing my place.

**Participant:** 2a.

## ***"The Work of God and the Trembling of Man" Part 1***

**Ted:** Yes, 2a. *"Jesus said, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you'."* I don't know how we can get away from that.

**Participant:** What does "observe" mean?

**Ted:** I think "observe"—help me out, somebody—

**Participant:** Just do 'em.

**Ted:** Just do 'em, yes. Observe them. It's not just "Okay, I've observed them; I got it." I think that it's actually doing them.

**Participant:** Obey them.

**Ted:** Obey them. So I just gave you nine verses with nineteen commandments and I was just wondering how everyone is doing. Yes?

**Participant:** Correct me. I want to clarify one point. The command is not so much the doctrine as that it is God who is at work in you for His good pleasure.

**Ted:** Mm-hmm.

**Participant:** That understanding is the doctrine. Therefore, if we know that's true, then we work it out.

**Ted:** That's right. I need to establish who God is in His attributes before we can get on to what man is to do. I'm saying that this is where we need to start.

I mean, I was watching TV the other night. We just see this all the time. There was a TV evangelist. His lead and his draw and his hook for his audience was, "If you've got sickness, if you've got money problems"—I mean, he listed all kinds of human issues—and he said, "I've got an answer for you." So he led with the human need. And I turned it off.

**Participant:** I was thinking that I remember almost the exact same thing. A man started with a 1-800 number. (*Laughter.*)

**Ted:** Mine said, "a love offering of \$19.99 plus shipping and handling." (*Laughter.*)

**Participant:** I just want to ask about the fear and trembling part, because we know that God works in us. The way that reads, does that mean then that we should take away our fear or have no fear?

**Ted:** Well, I'm going to get to that. Let me get God nailed down and then we'll get to the fear and trembling—man's part—nailed down. That's next week.

**Participant:** Can't you translate *gar* as *because*?

**Ted:** Because. That's a very easy way of doing it. I was looking at the two words and trying to figure them out. It was very interesting. I never realized that it was a more complex word than I thought it was. I didn't want to get distracted on that because that's just hot dogging it. (*Laughter.*)

Okay. Let's start with God in His character and attributes. What a novel idea! Let's start with God! (*Laughter.*) I mean, what an absolutely novel idea that we should deal with Him!

You know, God is the Creator! One of His attributes is that He is the Creator—His creative power. And we see that. What does Bruce say his favorite number one verse in the Bible is? Not John 3:16. What does Bruce say?

**Participant:** In the beginning, God.

## ***"The Work of God and the Trembling of Man" Part 1***

**Ted:** Okay. *"In the beginning, God."* Genesis 1:1. Listen to this. *"In the beginning, God created."* That's the first attribute of God that we hear about in the Bible—that God is creating.

I spoke to brother Rich Clark earlier as I was preparing this. I can see that some of you are getting more confused. I said, "Rich, what do we want to talk about? What are you interested in?"

He said that he'd been struck by a verse from 1 Corinthians 8:6. It says, *"There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist."* I mean, that's a very potent verse about the creative power—the absolute, omnipotent, creative power of God. God, from whom are all things, and Jesus Christ, through whom are all things. *"All things were made through Him."* John 1:3-4. *"All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men."*

This is one of the most powerful verses in all of Scripture—John 1, verses 3-4. *"All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made."* Now that's not only you, but that is your walk with Christ as well. *"By Him all things were made, and without Him was not anything made that was made."* Colossians 1:16. *"By Him"*—by Jesus Christ --*"all things were created, through Him and for Him, ... that in everything, He might be preeminent."* He created all things—the atoms, the molecules. But also, He created your life and your destiny, *"so that in all things He might be preeminent"*—first place.

And the greatest creation, I would say, is God's new creation. That's us. *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old is passed away; behold, the new has come."* That's God's great creative act. He created in us a new person, a new creation.

It's interesting to look at Ephesians the second chapter, verses 8-10. We know it very well, but maybe we don't know the second half of it very well. It starts off, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast."*

Now you all know that verse. *"For by grace you have been saved, through faith."* You know that verse. But what follows that verse? In verse 10: *"For"—gar—"we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."*

So all of the business about *"for by grace you have been saved, through faith,"* and *"this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God"*—all of that is because we are His workmanship. He saved us so that we might be His workmanship. Yes?

**Participant:** I wonder, in going back to your Philippians passage, if Paul is saying, *"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,"* because God is working in you what is pleasing to Him, and He took His Son to the cross.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Participant:** And you too, as a follower of Christ, might go to the cross.

**Ted:** Right.

## *"The Work of God and the Trembling of Man" Part 1*

**Participant:** Not that your salvation is in jeopardy and you should be afraid, but look out for what's coming because My followers tend to be roughed up.

**Ted:** Right. And please save that observation for next week, because I've taken all this time. (*Laughter.*) You see how quickly we're racing to that? But I've got to establish in your minds the total sovereign, creative power of the attribute of God to do all things, because that resolves a lot of other questions once you get that nailed down.

So we're not only the new creation in Christ. It says that not only are we God's workmanship. But this new creation, this regeneration in us—being born again—takes us *out of darkness into His marvelous light.*" 1 Peter 2:9.

And in Ephesians 5:8, *"At one time you were darkness. But now you are light in the Lord."*

So that was our standing. Prior to regeneration, prior to the new creation, we were in darkness! (*Ted sings.*)

"Long my imprisoned spirit lay,  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night."

That's the great hymn, "And Can It Be" by Charles Wesley. And that verse is a fantastic verse about what conversion means—from darkness into light.

"Long my imprisoned spirit lay." The image is of a person in prison. It's dark. It's deep in the ground.

"Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound"—the chains—"fast bound by sin and nature's night."

"Thine eye diffused a quickening ray." It's like the Lord comes to the cell and He looks in. And His eyes look in and see him. It's out of His eyes that the light diffused a quickening ray.

"I rose; the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off; my heart was free. I rose, went forth and followed Thee. Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?"

If you don't know that hymn, your church is singing silly hymns. (*Laughter.*) Silly, feel-good hymns about Jesus is my lover, like a rose trampled on the ground, and silly images like that. (*Laughter.*) That hymn has tremendous content, don't you think? That's just one of many verses. He wrote lots and lots of verses.

**Participant:** He wrote six thousand hymns.

**Ted:** Six thousand hymns. But that hymn alone, every single line in that hymn, has huge content. And it's a perfect description of what it means to be regenerated and to live a sanctified life.

So how does God create the new creation in us? How does He deliver us from darkness to light and save us? Well, it's very simple. And it says it in John 3:7. *"Do not marvel when I say,"* what? *"You must be born again."*

I read through George Whitfield, the great eighteenth century evangelist in England and in America. He made many trips to America. And you know, a lot of his evangelism, along with that of the Wesley's, really laid the foundation, a lot of people feel, for the American Revolution. But in every one of his sermons, Whitfield was focused on the new birth, that you must be born again. The new creation, the new person that God is



## ***"The Work of God and the Trembling of Man" Part 1***

creating in you, is only accomplished by being born again. Being born again transfers us from darkness to light.

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Isn't that interesting? "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again,"—you think He would say that one cannot enter the kingdom of God. But that's not what Jesus said. He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

The fact of the matter is that, prior to regeneration, we are in such darkness, such ignorance, such profound absence of God's light, that our eyes have to be opened so that we can even see it, much less proceed to it. Seeing precedes action.

**Participant:** Ted?

**Ted:** Yes?

**Participant:** They can't see it because they have bad doctrine. The darkness is actually bad doctrine.

**Ted:** That's right. Thank you. There are lots of aspects to the darkness. But one of the aspects is bad doctrine—believing things that are not true, in fact.

"You know, I don't have a drinking problem. I can stop drinking any time I want to." That is simply not true.

"You know, I've got my whole life planned out for five years. I've got my life goals and I'm on target to achieve those goals." It's simply not true.

That drives me crazy when guys tell me that—very driven and ambitious guys. They always want to tell me about how their lives are going to unfold. It's simply not true. It's a false teaching. It's a false belief on their part. I mean, we could go on and on with that.

So in 1 Peter 1 verse 23, *"You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God."* So the regeneration allows you to see the truth and the light. And that truth, as it says in 1 Peter, is through *"the living and abiding"* what? How does that regeneration come to us? Through the abiding and living what?

**Participant:** The word of truth.

**Ted:** The word of God. Does it say "the word of truth?" No, it says "the word of God." Maybe in another translation, in an earlier version.

But the fact of the matter is, that's how we get it! Somewhere along the line, you cannot repent unless you say, "What I used to believe was untrue, and now I have a new truth that I believe." There is no repentance unless there is a transfer from an old falsehood to a new truth, because only at that point can you say, "I am wrong." And only in that case will you flee to the new truth. You will run to it because you want to do what is true. Everyone wants to do what's true, ultimately. The truth they have may be a lie, but it's what they perceive to be true. They chase after that thing.

So I think, when I first came to know the Lord, when I first was converted, that's the thing that struck me. And I've shared this with you before. There were those three or four nights of discussion with Steve, who was instructing me about the faith. At first it started off as a very philosophical b-s session in a college dorm, and by the fourth night it had become much more pressing on me, because all of a sudden, I realized that what

## *"The Work of God and the Trembling of Man" Part 1*

Steve was talking about applied to me! It wasn't a kind of interesting political discussion, or the meaning of life! It was much more provocative! All at once, it applied to me! And the thing that brought me out of darkness into light is when I said this to myself. It was just a simple kind of impression that I had that just struck me. It said, "Why, this is true!" And that's when conversion takes place—when you say, "This is true!" Born again through *"the living and abiding word of God."*

So what is the extent of this new creation? Well, Bruce has talked about this already. It has a past, present and future. In the past God elected me. He chose me from before the foundation of the world. And He justified me through His crucifixion and resurrection. And I was saved at that time.

Bruce says, "Well, when was I saved?" I was saved before the foundation of the world, when Jesus died on Calvary. That's when I was saved. Yes?

**Participant:** (*Unclear.*) *"In the beginning"* implies His pre-existence.

**Ted:** Yeah, right.

**Participant:** So that's when he's—

**Ted:** He's already out there creating. And He's creating the new creation even before the foundation of the world by His selection and election of you, and then in time. In 33 A.D. Jesus goes to the cross. Three days later He is resurrected from the dead. The Scripture says, *"He was raised for our justification."*

So by both of those acts, in a very real sense I was saved in the past. In the present I'm being sanctified. I'm being made like unto Him, being holy. And that's my salvation that's going on now. And in the future I will be saved when I'm glorified and all the unholy, the fractured, the things in my life that don't hold together, the contradictions—the huge contradictions of my life—are all resolved in Him.

Another way of looking at this is that I'm kind of a spirit, soul, body guy. That may not be accurate. But at least that's the model I use. I believe that we were saved in our spirits. We are being saved in our souls. And we will be saved in our bodies.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Ted:** I mean to say I'm saved. In this body I'm 67 years old. A lot of things are starting to go wrong, and I'm not saved in my body. And it's not going to get better, no matter how many self-improvement classes I take or how much exercise I get. I'm on a down hill.

**Participant:** Is it safe to say that God elects some not to be saved?

**Ted:** Well, that's right.

**Participant:** He doesn't save everyone.

**Second Participant:** He passes by some.

**Ted:** Yes, He definitely passes by some. I mean, by our fallen nature we are all destined to hell. That's where we're all destined. By His grace He chooses some. It says that it's *"according to His good will and pleasure."* Ultimately, you have to be satisfied with God's good will and pleasure. If you keep looking for a reason why—you know, I'm more devoted. I'm more conscientious. I'm more disciplined. I pray more. If anything depends on that, it's not God's good will and pleasure; it's your good works.

## *"The Work of God and the Trembling of Man" Part 1*

This is a huge submission to me. And it divides a lot of people in the Christian community, because there are those who will say to me, "That's not my God!"

And I say, "I don't know who your God is, but my God is the God who acts according to His good will and pleasure. And whatever God wants to do, that's fine with me, even if it means that I wind up in hell." I will be obliged, if God sends me to hell—which I do not believe is His purpose—I will be obliged to praise Him all the way into the depths. That's a sobering thought because, at the end, every knee will bow and obey Him.

So how am I sanctified? How is God creating in the present? First and foremost, it's a mighty and miraculous work of God, like the works of election, justification and glorification. The thing that God is doing to me in my sanctification—that is, my present working out my salvation with fear and trembling—it is a mighty act of God. That's first and foremost. It's no different from the acts of having justified and elected me, or glorifying me in the future. It's no different, but it's the same work that God is doing.

Now listen to these verses that are very encouraging. *"I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus."*

"I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in You may bring it to completion." No, it doesn't say that. It says that He will.

"That He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion if you cooperate." It doesn't say that. This is a tremendous promise for those of us who are of the new creation.

Here's another verse. Bear with me on this one. I read it to you earlier. Remember the one from 1 Thessalonians? *"Admonish the idle; encourage the fainthearted; help the weak; be patient with them all. See that no one repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another."*

Remember that verse, when I asked you how you were doing with the nineteen commandments in nine verses? Listen to how this ends.

So I'm going to come to the end of this. *"Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. But test everything. Hold fast to that which is good. Abstain from every form of evil."*

Now after Paul lays down the law, the instructions, he then tells you how this is going to happen. He prays in the very next verse. *"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely."* He's praying for you. "May God sanctify you." He's not saying, "Now may God give you the strength to do everything that I've just told you to do." He says, *"May God sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

That's the prayer. All of these requirements are laid out. And how are they accomplished? In the end it is because God will sanctify you and bring you blameless in body, soul and spirit—in all parts. He's going to bring you blameless to the day of Christ Jesus.

Listen to this—verse 14. *"He who called you is faithful."* This is how this whole section of verses ends. *"He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it."*

All of those things that have been laid out before you—He *"is faithful; He will surely do it."*

## *"The Work of God and the Trembling of Man" Part 1*

Hebrews. *"Let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings to us so closely"—more requirements!—"and let us run with endurance the race of faith that is set before us."* More responsibilities! *"Looking to Jesus, the Founder and Perfecter of our faith."* He created my faith and He's going to perfect it. It's His work. He's the Creator; I'm not. He's doing it.

*"May the God of peace . . . equip you with everything good, that you may do His will."* And the question is how will I do His will? *"Working in us that which is pleasing in His sight."* *"May the God of peace . . . equip you with everything good, that you may do His will."* How am I going to do that will? *"Working in us."* This is God who works in us that which is pleasing in His sight.

*"By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them,"* Paul says. Kind of a testimonial here. "God took me where I was, a profaner and blasphemer of the church, a murderer of other Christians." And here he is. *"By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not in vain."*

He did something more. "On the contrary, you know, I worked hard after God gave me that grace, after God re-birthed me, after God made me a new creation. I worked harder than any of you guys."

Wait a second. I think I've gone too far here. *"But not."* Remember when you say "but" to somebody? It eliminates everything that was just said. Remember? Every time you say, "but," that just kind of eliminates. You know, you're a great person, but. (Laughter.) That eliminates it. "Great, great sermon, Ted, but." (Laughter.)

*"But it was not I, but the grace of God that was with me."*

But don't I have responsibilities? How do I experientially become actively involved in this God-sanctifying life? How do I work out my salvation with fear and trembling? That's for next week. I'll stop.

**Participant:** This verse is really good because we were taught early on in the Christian life what grace is. Grace is God's attitude toward us.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Participant:** But here, it's empowering us.

**Ted:** That's good.

**Participant:** It's not an attitude. It's an action.

**Ted:** That's right. It's very potent, yes. Are we done now? Any questions?

**Participant:** I'll go back to the question. (Unclear.) I'm not pushing back or disagreeing with this. It's strictly for clarification, because this is what you're setting up. Here are all the rules and regulations. But what you've expressed is, it's done. Although we have a responsibility to do that to the best of our ability, it's not under duress. We're not under guilt, but it's out of gratitude that we aim to fulfill those, but resting in Christ and His work.

**Ted:** I would say that is only partially true, because it says that we do our best. I know Bruce has a saying that is—Bruce, you're not listening!—(Laughter.) He says, "Do all you can and leave the rest to God."

## ***"The Work of God and the Trembling of Man" Part 1***

That is why I want to get into this next week. I think that, in a sense, we leave the rest to God from the beginning. And what proceeds from that point is how we actually work that out. I'm interested in how we actually live out the Christian life. Where does it come from? Where does the power come from? I mean, how does God actually do it?

And some people will say, "That's a mystery." I don't think it's a mystery. I think it's really clear. Yes?

**Participant:** We'd just been saying, "Doing these things out of gratitude to God." Nevertheless, it's still God working in us to give us the gratitude.

**Ted:** That's right. You're exactly right. If God didn't give you the gratitude, you wouldn't do it out of gratitude.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Ted:** Your gratitude does not come as an abstract emotion. It comes as a response from God doing a mighty work in your life. Bishop?

**Bishop Rodgers:** It doesn't say that we're to do this only out of gratitude.

**Ted:** What?

**Bishop Rodgers:** It does not say that we're to do this only out of gratitude.

**Ted:** Right. Give me a chance to deal with it next week. Did you want to say anything more, Bishop?

**Bishop Rodgers:** It just says, "Do it."

**Ted:** Just do it. And how is that going to happen? It says, "Do it. Observe all I have commanded you." How do you do that?

Okay. Let us pray. Go in peace, and may God do in you and work in you that which is pleasing in His sight through Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Applause.*)