



# Does One Secure Their Own Salvation? Analysis on Continue to Work Out Your Salvation

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## ABSTRACT

Though conceptually different, Sayyed Hosein Nashr and Hans Kung's ideas on salvation share the same theological characteristics, which includes emphasizing the need of teaching kindness in order to achieve salvation. There is an inconsistency between this concept with the Bible. Luther believed that people are justified by faith and that this is the concept of salvation. What about the advice to "continue to work out your salvation" in Philippians 2:12? What type of salvation do believers achieve? Researchers are interested in gaining a comprehensive understanding of Philippians 2:12. The author notes that many members of the congregation lack a full grasp of the concept of salvation. This study aims to thoroughly explore the idea of "continue to work out your salvation" as presented in Philippians 2:12, employing qualitative methods such as textual and literary analysis. First, carry out in-depth text studies and observations on Philippians 2:12-18; secondly, build an exposition framework based on the collected data information. The research findings divide Philippians 2:12-18 into several components: a life of ongoing spiritual renewal (a transformative process encompassing spiritual growth, relational dynamics, and communal aspect) and a life that shines as a light (aligning with Jesus). Salvation is not stagnant but dynamic and demands active, progressive act. Good deeds stem from a proper response to the gifts received.

Keywords: Salvation, Work, Spiritual Renewal, Light

## Article history

Submitted: August 29, 2023

Revised: July 25, 2024

Accepted: July 31, 2024

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**How to cite this article:** Suparyadi, Z., Hariyanto, S., Siregar, S., & Tumbelaka-Wieland, J.M. (2024).

Does One Secure Their Own Salvation? Analysis on Continue to Work Out Your Salvation.

*Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat* 8 (2): 220-235. DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.46445/ejti.v8i2.724>

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## INTRODUCTION

The epistemological perspective of salvation theology as proposed by Hans Kung, representing Christian (Catholic) theology, and Sayyed Hosein Nashr, representing Islamic theology, serves to legitimize and explain the esoteric points within Catholic and Islamic perspectives. Despite some conceptual differences, both religions share a theological commonality: they are monotheistic and fundamentally teach goodness as the path to salvation (Abdullah, 2019). The document *Nostra Aetate*, which addresses the Church's relationship with non-Christian religions, states that all people have the right to attain salvation. Therefore, God has a way to save each individual. Institutionally, each religion brings salvation in its own way (Abdullah, 2019). The concept of salvation according to Luther was enlightened by his reading of Paul's writings, particularly the Letter to the Romans, in his personal experience. In Romans 3:28, he discovered that "...one is justified by faith..." Furthermore, referring to Romans 1:17, Luther wrote: "God finally showed me mercy, allowing me to understand the inner relationship between the two expressions, 'The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel' and 'The righteous shall live by faith.' Then I began to understand 'the righteousness of God' as the means by which people are firmly saved by God's grace, that is, through faith" (Serin, 2021).

In an observation conducted by the author within the community of believers (church), it was found that some congregation members still do not fully understand the concept of salvation comprehensively (Karo-Karo, 2022). Salvation is often understood merely as accepting Jesus as the only Lord and Savior, without a significant visible change in daily life. The Apostle Paul commands believers in Philippians 2:12, "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...."

The study of "work out your salvation" has been conducted by theologians in biblical and systematic theology, focusing on the interpretation of this text. This research includes an examination of interpretative issues related to this phrase. There are several misconceptions about the text in Philippians 2:12-13, particularly regarding the use of the term "work out" (Beers, 2016). Reformed theologians (Calvin, Berkhof, Hoekema, and Packer) accept the paradoxical concept and believe that humans contribute to the regeneration of their identity through God's grace. God's grace is the primary cause enabling humans to obey and work out their salvation. Therefore, understanding the paradoxical concept must be accompanied by love and humility before God. The paradoxical concept of working out salvation involves both the sovereignty of God and human responsibility (Zega, 2023). Faot argues that humans can only understand salvation through divine revelation as found in the Bible. The Bible teaches that working out salvation involves both the sovereignty of God and human responsibility, which are inseparable (Faot et al., 2021). In the city of Kraljevo, Central Serbia, Orthodox Christians

'work out' their salvation by engaging in a structured 'liturgical life,' such as attending Divine Liturgy, regularly receiving the Holy Communion, and fasting. However, while such a lifestyle is seen as a path to salvation, it also leads to social differentiation: diligent churchgoers find themselves distinct from contemporary Serbian society (Lackenby, 2023). Research on the concept of “work out your salvation” is necessary, as in-depth study can lead to important implications for Christians.

Research on the concept of “work out your salvation” has been conducted by other scholars. According to Gulo and Manurung (2020), the term “work out” (Greek: *katergazomai*) means “to bring to completion,” rather than to create something that did not previously exist (Compare Philippians 2:12 with Ephesians 6:13, which uses the same term). Most English translations render this verse as “*Work out your salvation*” rather than “*Work for your salvation.*” Thus, the text of “work out your salvation” refers to salvation in a communal sense, aimed at producing the fruits of that salvation (Barus, 2022). Ware argues that the command Paul uses in Philippians 2:12, *την εαυτων σωτηριαν καταργαζεσθε* (*ten eauton soterian katergazesthe*), is a well-known core interpretation that has traditionally puzzled interpreters. Scholars have struggled to reconcile this command with the context of the letter or with Paul's overall theology (Adeoye, 2024). Previous studies have contributed to the development of theological knowledge but have been less significant in exploring the concept of "work out your salvation" in Philippians 2:12. These studies often focus on interpretation rather than directly linking the concept to the text and context of the letter's writing. Therefore, this research aims to delve into the concept of "work out your salvation" in Philippians 2:12 through a grammatical analysis and provide a direct translation that aligns with the text used at that time. Philippians 2:12 needs careful examination. The verse states, "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." This text requires in-depth study to provide practical implications for Christians. In this context, "continue to work out your salvation" refers to a continuous action leading to transformation, whether sudden (radical) or gradual (progressive), until one becomes more like Christ.

Based on the background above, the research question is: What is the concept of "work out your salvation" according to Philippians 2:12? The aim of this study is to comprehensively understand the concept of "work out your salvation" as presented in Philippians 2:12.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative method with a textual and bibliographic analysis approach. Qualitative research is a deep analytical approach that employs inductive analysis techniques to understand issues subjectively (Mau, 2021). Bibliographic research involves activities closely related to data collection through the analysis of data or

information to achieve accurate findings (Mau, 2022). Bibliographic sources aim to gather the data and information needed by the author from various resources, such as books, journals, and other relevant sources related to the topic of discussion (Mau, 2022). The author follows these research procedures: First, conducting an in-depth text study and observation of Philippians 2:12-18 by identifying the meanings of words according to their original language (Greek). Second, constructing an expository framework based on the data collected from grammatical analysis of the aspects of working out salvation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The relationship between the Apostle Paul and the Philippian church was very strong. In this letter, he explains that he received support from the Philippian congregation. He had written the book of Philippians while he was in prison, and it is a personal and affectionate letter that expresses his relationship with the Philippian church (Maya, 2018). This is quite different from his usual tendency, which was rarely to accept support from the churches he served. His common practice for meeting his needs was to work (Budiyono & Jani, 2024). He had a genuine bond of friendship with the Philippian church (Åkerlund, 2016). He took pride in the fact that he had never received support from anyone or from any church, except for the Philippian congregation. In fact, in chapter 4:1, he refers to them as "my dear friends whom I love and long for, my joy and crown." These affectionate terms demonstrate his pride and deep connection with the Philippian church (Cheng, 2022; Eadie, 1884; Wańczyk, 2019).

The letter to the Philippian church serves as a platform for Paul to display his best pastoral qualities as he praises the congregation, teaches, encourages, advises, and offers warnings (Are, 2021; Williamson, 2023). He always deeply cared for the members of this congregation when giving them advice and guidance. He spoke to the Philippian church with the pride of someone who had established the church and served as its spiritual leader and mentor (Åkerlund, 2016). The author observes that the immediate context of Philippians 2:12 is the entire passage designated by LAI as Philippians 2:12-18. Therefore, the author will conduct a comprehensive syntactical analysis of these verses.

Philippians 2:12-18 is a passage that can be divided into three sections, each with its main message. The first and second sections contain Paul's advice to the church, while the third section provides a conclusion to that advice. Each section will be analyzed, along with the relationships between them, to uncover the main idea of the passage.

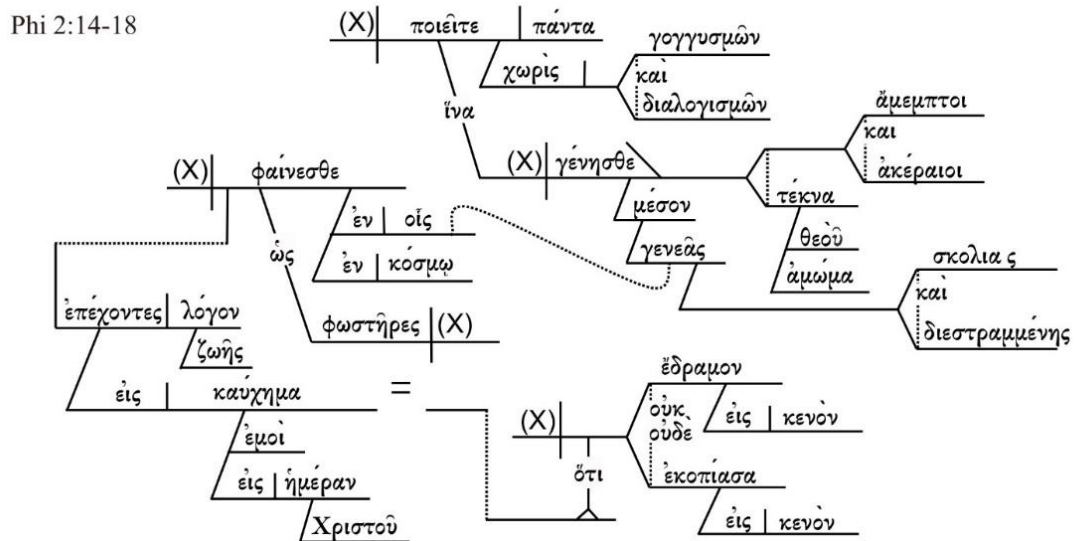
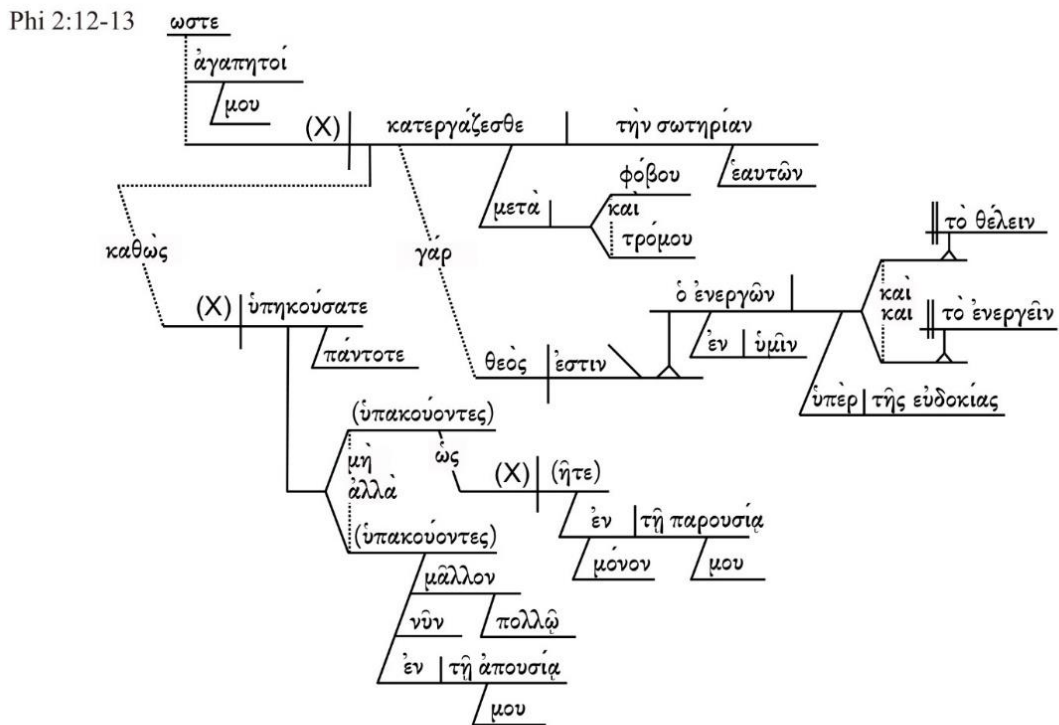


Figure 1. Syntax of Philippians 2:12-1 (Leedy, n.d.)

The first section, consisting of verses 12 and 13, begins with the conjunction *ωστε* (*hoste*). This word is often used to link *result clause* (*consecutive clauses*) which aims to explain the action indicated in the verb of the main clause (Ayer, 2018). In this case, *ωστε* (*hoste*) serves to connect the previous paragraph (the Christological hymn) with the following part, which contains Paul's advice. Gerald F. Hawthorne explains the role of *ωστε* in this verse as follows: "The Conjunction *ωστε* ("Therefore," "well then") joins this new section to that which has preceded it from 1:27 onwards (cf. 2:12b with 1:27b), but especially to the example of Christ set out in the hymn (2:6-11) "well then in light of the fact that Christ was obedient (2:8)", you also must be obedient (Hawthorne & Martin,

2015). The Philippian church should embody the character of Christ (2:5) and thus be obedient in the same way Christ was obedient. The word *ωστε* (*hoste*) is translated as "therefore," and its placement at the beginning of the sentence might give the impression that verse 12 is entirely disconnected from the previous verses.

There are some alternative position from *μη ως εν τη πα ρουσι α μου μονον α λλ α νυν πολλω μαλλον εν τη απ ουσι α μου* (*me hos en te parousia mou monon Alla nun pollo mallon en te apousia mou* – “not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence”) like usually also begins with *κα θως πα ντοτε υπ ηκουσ ατε* (*katos pantote hupokousate* – “as you have always obeyed,”) or with *την εα υτων σωτηρι αν κα τεργ αζεσθε* (*ten eauton soterian katergazesthe* – “continue to work out your salvation”). The author prefers the first alternative as it clarifies the contrast in *μη αλλα νυν* (*me alla nun*), as follows: “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.”

From the sentence diagram above, the author observes that the words *μη α λλ α* (*me alla*) serve as a conjunction rather than connecting parallel phrases. Literally, this phrase means "but not." Paul emphasizes that the Philippian church was obedient, but not only in his presence; rather, he hopes they will be even more obedient in his absence. Meanwhile, the word *υπ ηκουσ ατε* (*hupokousate*) appears without an explicit object in the sentence diagram, connecting with the conjunction *μη α λλ α* (*me alla*). This leads to two interpretations: whether the context of the word *υπ ηκουσ ατε* more accurately refers to obedience to Paul as an apostle of God, meaning "obey me," or if it signifies a demand for obedience from the congregation to the Lord Jesus. John Gill explains the object of this obedience as follows:

As you have always obeyed; not “me” as the Arabic and Ethiopic versions supplied; but either God, acting according to his revealed will, they had knowledge of ; or Christ, by receiving Him as prophet, priest and king, by submitting to His righteousness, and the scepter of His grace; or the gospel by embracing the truths of it, professing them, and abiding in them, and by subjecting to the ordinances of it, and doing all things whatsoever Christ has commanded: and this they did “always” they were always abounding in the works of the lord, doing His will; they abolished by Christ, and continued steadfastly in his doctrines, and kept the ordinances as they were delivered to them, and walked in all the commandments of the lord blameless" (Gill, 2011).

The main verb in the first structure is “*κατεργάζεσθε*” (*katergazesthe* - "work out"). This is a deponent verb (William (Jelf, 1992) This type of word is morphologically passive but has an active meaning, "work out to completion." It is followed by the object *την σωτηριαν αυτων* (*ten soterian eauton* – "your salvation"). The term "your salvation" does not provide a clear explanation regarding the suffix (personal pronoun) "your"—whether it is plural or singular. The pronoun "your" is a direct translation of *αυτων*

(*eauton*), which is a reflexive pronoun in the plural form. In this context, the salvation Paul refers to is the comprehensive salvation of the entire church (Barus, 2022). The Philippian church is made up of believers who have accepted Jesus as their Savior. However, even after receiving this salvation, they still need to continue growing towards spiritual maturity. One aspect of the spiritual growth that the Apostle Paul hopes for the Philippians is unity (Philippians 2:2-3). Therefore, this context is better understood in terms of restoration or spiritual well-being, rather than as a reference to salvation and eternal life.

This is followed by the phrase *μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου* (*meta phobou kai tromou* – "with fear and trembling"), which means with respect and humility towards one another. This reflects the attitude or character of the congregation in their process of spiritual restoration (see also 2 Cor. 2:3; Eph. 6:5).

The final part of this section begins with a subordinate clause causal conjunction (Benedicte, 2009) "*γὰρ*" (*gar*), which explains Paul's reasoning. This word also functions to connect the main clause (verse 12) with the subordinate clause. *θεός ἐστιν ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ τὸ θελεῖν καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας*. (*Theos estin ho energon en humin kai to thelein kai to energein huper tes eudokias*) "for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose." The verb *ἐνεργῶν* (*energon*) is a present active participle, indicating that God acts as the motivating force or agent among the Philippian church, enabling them to fulfill His purposes. Robertson explains that this term was commonly used in Aristotle's time to describe an object that provides power "Articular present active participle of *energeo* from *enegos* (*en, ergos*) one at work common verb of Aristotle on, to be at work, to energize" (Robertson, n.d.). Thus, the first section can be transformed into: "Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed my advice while I was with you, so much more now that I am away, you should continue to follow my guidance. Work out your spiritual transformation with respect and humility towards one another, because God is the one who enables you to desire and act according to His purpose."

The second section continues with more specific advice tailored to the context of the Philippian church. It begins with verse 14 *παντα ποιειτε χωρις γογγυσμων καὶ διαλογισμων* (*panta poieite khoris goggusmon kai dialogismon*) "Do everything without complaining and arguing." The term "Without complainin and arguing" (*goggusmon kai dialogismon*) indicates that there was indeed some division within the church. This message is directed to the Philippian believers, and *γόγγυσμον* (*goggusmon*) is a plural noun, suggesting that complaints had frequently occurred among the Philippians. Therefore, this part can be transformed to: 'Do everything without complaining or arguing among yourselves.'

The term *ἵνα* (*hina*) in the sentence diagram works as *subordinate clause* explaining objective from *main clause* of *ἵνα γενησθε ἀμεμπτοι καὶ ἀκεραιοι τέκνα θεου*



αμωμητα εν μεσω γενεας σκολιας και διεστραμμενης και διεστραμμένης (*hina geneste amemptoi kai akeraioi, tekna theou amoma meson geneas skolias kai diestrammenes*) “so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.” The phrases *αμεμπτοι και ακεραιοι* (*amemptoi kai akeraioi*) can be further clarified as “blameless and without fault,” meaning “free from any accusations or wrongdoing.” Additionally, “children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation” can be refined to “as children of God who live righteously among a wicked and sinful generation.” The prepositional phrase *εν οισ* (*en ois*) further clarifies the previous section (so that *ois phaineste hos phosteres en kosmo logon zoes, epeksontes*) – “so that you shine like stars in the world, holding fast to the word of life”). This can be refined to: “In this situation, you should shine among them like stars in the sky by offering the message that guides them on how they should live.” The verb *επεχοντες* (*epekhontes*) is more accurately translated as “offering” rather than “holding fast.” Vern Sheridan Poythress, citing BDAG, explains that *επεχηοντες* (*epecheontes*) does not always mean “hold fast.”

The key verb *επέχω* can be used in a range of ways. When used with a temporal expression (the accusative of extent), it can mean “stop, stay,” as in Acts 19:22: “And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself [Paul] stayed [*επέσχεν*] in Asia for a while” (RSV). With a dative object, it means “hold toward, aim at,” in the sense of fixing attention on, as in Acts 3:5: “And he fixed his attention [*επέιχε*] upon them, expecting to receive something from them” (RSV). BDAG indicates that with an accusative object *επέχω* means “hold fast”: “wailing seized [*επέιχε*] the whole camp and the city” (Plutarch Otho 17.6). Since in Phil 2:16 *επέχω* has the accusative object “word of life” (*λόγον ζωής*), Bauer’s lexicon classifies Phil 2:16 in this category, and assigns the meaning “hold fast.” This conclusion seems reasonable. But is “hold out” also a possibility? BDAG does not list “hold out” as a possible meaning of *επέχω*. But the Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek lexicon not only lists the meaning “hold out,” but assigns this meaning to Phil 2:16 (Poythress, 2002).

In the Good News Bible translation, this verse reads: “*as you offer them the message of life. If you do so, I shall have reason to be proud of you on the day of Christ.*” Here, Paul is explaining the impact of the church's mission in the midst of a wicked world. The object *λογον ζωης* (*logon zoes*), which serves as an *indirect object* in the sentence diagram, has a causative role and can be translated as “the message that guides people on how they should live.”

The word *εις* (*eis*) explains the condition of the verb *επεχοντες* (*epekhontes*) and the noun *καυκημα* (*kaukhema*), meaning “I have reason to be proud.” Paul is not referring to his own pride but to the reason for his pride at a future time, specifically *εισ ημεραν Κηριστου* (*eis hemeran Khristou*) – “on the day of Christ,” referring to “the second coming of Christ.”

The word *οτι* (*hoti*) in this context introduces a substantival clause that explains the basis of Paul's pride, translating to "because" *ουκ εις κενον εδραμον ουδε εις κενον εκοπιασα* (*ouk eis kenon edramon oude eis kenon ekopiassa*) meaning "I have not run in vain or labored in vain." Using the athletic metaphor, it is more appropriately retranslated as "all my efforts and service have been worthwhile."

Overall, the second section can be transformed as follows: "Do everything without grumbling or arguing among yourselves, so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God in a crooked and twisted generation. In such a situation, you should shine among them like stars in the sky by offering the message that guides them on how they should live. If you do this, I will have reason to be proud on the day of Christ's second coming, as it will show that all my efforts and service were not in vain."

The third section is the conclusion of the paragraph. It begins with *αλλα ει και* (*alla ei kai*) meaning "but even if." The word *αλλα* (*alla*) serves as an introductory conjunction, and *ει και* (*ei kai*) indicates a concessive clause, meaning "although" or "even though," followed by the verb *σπενδομαι* (*spendomai*). This verb literally means "poured out as an offering" and, in this context, can be clarified as "my blood being poured out as a sacrifice." Albert Barnes explains the etymology of the word *spendomai* as follows:

*σπενδομαι* (*spendomai*) – properly means, to pour out, to make libation; and is commonly used, in the classic writers, in connection with sacrifices. It refers to a drink-offering to the gods, before he tested of it himself, poured apart of it on the altar. It is used also to denote the fact that when an animal was about to be slain in sacrifice, wine was poured on it as a solemn act of devoting it to God; compare Num 15:15, 28:7, 14. (Barnes, n.d.)

In this context, Paul speaks about his death. The phrase *επι τη θυσια* (*epi te thusia*) refers to the word "sacrifice," which has three meanings: first, the act of sacrificing; second, the victim that is sacrificed; and third, as an offering. This can be clarified as "I will be killed, and it will seem as though my blood is being poured out as a sacrifice." The phrase *επι τη θυσια και λειτουργια της πιστεως υμων* (*epi te thusia kai leitourgia tes pisteos humon*) – "upon the sacrifice and service of your faith" – presents interpretive challenges. If Paul is illustrating this within the context of Jewish ceremonies, the word *επι* (*epi*) is more accurately translated as "in addition to," because in Jewish rituals, blood is poured not on the sacrifice but around the altar (Jo, 2023).

However, if Paul is illustrating this with reference to pagan ceremonies, the relationship indicated by *επι* (*epi*) is more accurately translated as "upon" or "on," because pagans poured blood on the sacrifice placed on the altar. It seems that "upon" or "on" is a more suitable translation in the context of the Philippian congregation, which had a pagan (non-Jewish) background. In this case, Paul is depicted as dying as a martyr, and this sacrifice is related to blood being poured out on the offering. The verb *λειτουργια* (*leitourgia*), meaning "to serve," is more accurately understood in conjunction with *θυσια* (*thusia*), so it implies "serving by offering a sacrifice," with God implicitly being the

recipient of the offering. The term *πίστεως* (*pisteos*) is more accurately translated to mean “you believe in God” rather than as “faith” being offered as a sacrifice to God.

Here, faith is more accurately understood as the motivation or driving force for the congregation to offer sacrifices to God. The Good News Bible translates this verse very well: “Perhaps my life’s blood is to be poured out like an offering on the sacrifice that your faith offers to God. If that is so, I am glad and share my joy with you all.” Based on this, the sentence can be rephrased as: “However, even if I must die as a martyr, which is like the sacrifice of blood poured out on the offering you present to God driven by your faith in Him, I am glad and share my joy with you all.” Paul’s potential death brings him joy, not sorrow. He also invites the Philippian congregation to rejoice with him, so they share in his joy.

Then, in the following section, *το αυτο και υμεις χαιρετε και συγχαιρετε μοιμοι* (*to auto kai humeis khairate kai sugkhairate moi*) translates to “Now you also rejoice for the same reason and rejoice with me.” Here, the Philippian congregation is also invited to rejoice over the sacrifices they offer to God and to share in Paul's joy, so Paul too can feel the same joy as the congregation. This can be rephrased as: “If so, I rejoice and you should rejoice with me so that you feel the same joy as I do. You should also rejoice over your sacrifices to God and share your joy with me so that I too feel the same joy as you.”

Based on the grammatical analysis above, the author provides a direct translation of the text to capture the true meaning as intended by the Apostle Paul as follows: “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed my instructions when I was with you, even more now in my absence, you must continue to follow my teachings. Keep working on your spiritual renewal with respect and humility toward one another because it is God who works in you, inspiring both the desire and the action to fulfill His purpose. Do everything without complaining and arguing among yourselves, so that no one can accuse you of wrongdoing or find evil in your hearts. As God's good children living among sinful and wicked people, you must shine like stars in the sky, offering them the message that guides them to live righteously. If you do this, I will have reason to be proud on the day of Christ's return, as it shows that all my efforts and service were not in vain. If so, I rejoice and you should rejoice with me, so that you can share in my joy. You should also be glad for your sacrifices to God, and share your joy with me, so that I too can share in your happiness.

Based on the grammatical analysis above, Philippians 2:12-18 can be divided into two groups as follows: first, a life that continually pursues spiritual renewal; and second, a life that becomes a light.

### **Everlasting Life of Spiritual Renewal**

The Apostle Paul does not urge the congregation to start working to earn salvation. Instead, sentences, phrases, and words should be interpreted as correlating with the main

idea. The central theme of the first group (verses 12-13) is a life of continual spiritual renewal.

One aspect of spiritual maturity that the Apostle Paul expects from the Philippian church is unity (Philippians 2:2-3). The unity of believers is fundamentally linked to the expression of spiritual maturity. His letter to the Ephesians shows that spiritual maturity is achieved through unity in faith and knowledge of Christ (Ephesians 4:13); he begins with the phrase "reach unity in the faith" (Ephesians 4:3) (Mayer, 2013). A mature church can only be achieved by maintaining this unity (Siahaan & Siahaya, 2023). The unity of believers emphasizes the importance of 'spiritual ecumenism,' rooted in prayer, which is the soul of all efforts for Christian unity (Hocken, 2010).

The spiritual renewal of believers involves a journey of growth and transformation rooted in faith and spiritual practice. It emphasizes deepening one's relationship with God, engaging in spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, and worship, and fostering a sense of community and love. (Randolph, 2011). Integrating biblical principles and spiritual practices is crucial in guiding individuals towards a deeper relationship with God and others (Adeoye, 2024). This renewal process is aimed at aligning a believer's life with Christian values and principles (Cook et al., 2012). There is a connection between spiritual growth and the impact of spiritual maturity, both on individuals seeking renewal and on those who assist them in their journey. (Porter et al., 2017).

Christian spiritual renewal requires a holistic journey involving personal growth, community engagement, and alignment with Christian values and teachings. It is a transformative process that encompasses individual spiritual growth, relational dynamics, and the broader communal aspects of faith and Christian practice. Therefore, Christ plays a crucial role in shaping the spiritual formation and faith growth of believers (Chrismastianto et al., 2022).

Spiritual formation is a broad term that refers to all efforts, means, instructions, and disciplines aimed at deepening faith and advancing spiritual growth, helping believers to align themselves with the image of Christ (Chia & Chishi, 2023).

### **The Life That Becomes Light**

The Apostle Paul wants believers to shine among others like stars in the sky by offering a message that guides them on how to live. This way, each individual in the congregation can grow and develop in true knowledge and understanding. Paul encourages believers to make Christ the center of their lives and to model their lives after Him.

Barclay interprets the concept of being a light in Matthew 5:14 as referring to the very essence of Jesus. Since Jesus is the light, and Christians are commanded to be the light of the world, He is essentially instructing believers to become like Himself (Selan, 2020).

Wilhoit emphasizes that a believer's daily attitude represents practical theology, manifested within their community as a response to God's presence in their life. In a rapidly changing world, believers must continue to fulfill their role as "salt and light" amidst a society that increasingly glorifies itself while neglecting others (Fernando et al., 2023). The Apostle Peter explains that Christians are called out of darkness into the light of God (1 Peter 2:9) (Bani et al., 2023).

The spiritual and personal characteristics of believers as children of light, according to Ephesians 5:1-21, are as follows: First, to imitate God; Second, to be submissive to Him; Third, to discern what pleases the Lord; Fourth, to have wisdom to understand God's will; Fifth, to be filled with the Holy Spirit; and Sixth, to exhibit humility in reverence for the Lord (Tino & Kristiana, 2020).

### **Theological Reflection**

The discussion on salvation from a human perspective involves two aspects: First, that God is consistent with His attributes, and second, that God desires His redeemed people to bear the fruit of repentance.

God never fails to fulfill His promises; everything He has spoken will certainly come to pass (Zaluchu, 2021). God remains consistent with His attributes, which are revealed through His self-disclosure throughout history. God's unique attributes define His entire divinity and are permanent qualities. Therefore, believers must recognize that God's essence, attributes, awareness, and will do not change. It is God's perfection that ensures He cannot change and remains faithful. As John G. Stackhouse summarizes, God cannot perform logically contradictory actions and will not act against His own moral nature (Erickson, 2013).

Philippians 2:12, from God's perspective, can be understood as: "God demands the fruit of salvation from His people." In this context, salvation that bears fruit is salvation that is demonstrated or visible through the actions of the person, showing true repentance. In other words, there should be evidence reflected in daily life and deeds. God desires genuine repentance, where His people sincerely turn to Him. The Apostle Paul emphasizes the importance for the entire congregation to continuously work out the salvation granted by God, aligning their lives with God's truth so that their lives truly witness the richness of God's grace and mercy given to His redeemed people.

### **CONCLUSION**

The word *katēgazomai* plays a crucial role in verse 12, not as an effort to achieve salvation that has not yet been attained, but as a condition where individuals have already received Jesus, been saved, and justified by faith in Him. In verse 13, the Apostle Paul explains that it is God who works both to will and to act according to His good purpose.

In this context, Paul emphasizes that the work of salvation and even the good deeds performed by people occur entirely through God's intervention.

*Katergazomai* represents a command or instruction from the Apostle Paul to the congregation, aimed at producing the fruits of the salvation granted by God. The ultimate goal Paul demands from believers is that they "shine among them (the unsaved) like stars in the sky."

After receiving salvation from God, the next responsibility is to maintain good moral character. Believers need to respond to this invaluable salvation by walking and living according to the truth of God's Word. Good deeds are the result of a proper response to the grace received; moral actions or attitudes that are good and perfect are not the primary condition for receiving the gift of salvation, since no one can save themselves from their own sins. Only God's grace can grant someone this salvation. Subsequently, good moral behavior is the result of the Holy Spirit's work within each believer.

Philippians 2:12 reflects the believer's attitude in responding to the salvation that has been received. It is not a static condition but requires active and progressive engagement. In other words, living in alignment with Christ. Paul desires that believers become individuals who are obedient, humble themselves, and do not consider themselves more important than others.

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