

That's why Paul brings up this issue with the churches in Philippians. In Philippians 2:12-13 Paul writes, *"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, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."* Paul says in one breath, *"Work out your own salvation,"* and in the next, *"It is God who works in you."* It is God who works in us. And, yes, there is work for us to do. Yes, the Spirit empowers us to do the work. And, yes, we do the work.

God is big and mysterious enough that we cannot simply put a label on this process and move on. It requires continual engagement and wrestling and discovering how to live a Spirit-filled life today. Not ten years from now. Not tomorrow. But right now, in the particular time and place He has put us, as we "work out our salvation" and as "God works in us." Let us keep in step with the Holy Spirit.

Questions for Reflection

1. Have you ever sought God's will for your life? Why do you need God's will in your life?
2. How do you keep in step with the Holy Spirit?
3. Do you desperately need the Holy Spirit? If so, why do you need Him?
4. Have you heard the voice of the Holy Spirit? How do you respond to the voice?

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Forgotten God (5)
Forget About His Will for Your Life!
Philippians 2:12-13
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I think we need to forget about God's will for our lives, because we use "God's will" as an excuse for inaction or even disobedience. It's much less demanding to think about God's will for our future than asking Him what He wants us to do right now. It's safer to commit to following Him someday instead of this day.

We wonder what living according to His will would actually look and feel like. We were never promised a twenty-year plan of action. Instead, God promises never to leave or forsake us. God wants us to listen to His Spirit on a daily basis, and even throughout the day, as difficult and stretching moments arise, and in the midst of the ordinary life. Therefore, instead of searching for "God's will for my life," we would learn to seek after "the Spirit's leading in my life today." We need to learn to pray for an open and willing heart, to surrender to the Spirit's leading with our friend, child, spouse, circumstance, or decision in our lives right now.

We are called to keep in step with the Holy Spirit. In Galatians Paul said, *"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ... Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."* (5:16, 25). The phrases 'keeping in step with the Spirit' and 'walking with the Spirit' are mostly likely familiar Bible verses. But how do these phrases affect our lives in a practical and meaningful way? Dwelling on God's plan for the future often excuses us from faithful and sacrificial living now. It tends to create a safe zone, where we have "spiritual" conversations about what God "might" have planned for our lives. God wants to see His children stake everything on His power and presence in their lives.

The God of the universe is not something we can just add to our lives and keep on as we did before. The Spirit who raised Christ from the

dead is not someone we can just call on when we want a little extra power in our lives. Jesus Christ did not die in order to follow us. He died and rose again so that we could forget everything else and follow Him to the cross and to true Life.

If all we want is a little Jesus to “spiritualize” our lives, a little extra God to keep us out of hell, we are missing out on the fullness of life we were created for. We only need the Holy Spirit’s guidance and help if we truly want to follow the Way of Jesus Christ. We only need Him if we desire to “obey everything” He commanded and to teach others to do the same (Matt. 28:18-20). We only need the Holy Spirit if we have genuinely repented and believe. We desperately need the Holy Spirit if we truly believe and have turned from the way we were headed and joined a different ‘Way of living.’ We cannot live this Way without the Spirit in us.

Some people encounter Jesus and say, “Sweet! Jesus, do You want to join the party of my life with this sin, that addiction, this destructive relationship, and we’ll all just coexist together?” But we need to say, “Sweet Jesus, you are the best thing that has ever happened to me! I want to turn from all the sin and selfishness that rules me. I want to let it go and walk with you. Only you. You are my life now. Help me to walk away from the enslaving, worthless things in life.” Do you see the difference between these two examples?

We were called by Jesus to give up everything. His call is to come and take up the cross (Luke 9:23). When Jesus calls us to take up our cross, He is doing much more than calling us to endure the daily, circumstantial troubles of life. The people in Jesus’ day were very familiar with the cross. Having witnessed crucifixion, they understood the commitment and sacrifice of taking up a cross. Jesus is calling us to be willing to suffer anything and forsake everything for the sake of the gospel. His call is for total surrender. He calls us to give up all that we have, to give even to the point of offering up our lives as a living sacrifice. His call means realizing that His power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

You know the story where Jesus saw people putting gifts into the offering box. At first some rich people gave, and it sounded like their contributions must have been financially large. Then Jesus pointed out a poor widow, who put in two small copper coins. Jesus said, *“Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on”* (Luke 21:3-4). Jesus praises her for her revolutionary faith, for holding nothing back. She literally gave everything she had, even though she was a “poor widow” with no other means of income or support.

What if you could hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and He asked you to literally give everything you owned? What if He asked you to sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor? Could you do it? These questions might challenge us like crazy. We may want to give it all as much as we can to God, to truly submit ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit. But, sometimes we want to hold back a little. We struggle to keep in step with the Spirit moment by moment. To submit and give up everything truly is radical and terrifying. The Spirit may lead us into total sacrifice financially. The Spirit may ask us to move to a different city or to stay where we are and spend our time in very different ways.

I would like to challenge you to examine yourselves. Look at the “fruit” of your own life and let it be a gauge for you of your own connectedness with the Spirit. Do you allow the Holy Spirit to lead when you are making your budget? Perhaps He will direct you to allocate the monies differently than you otherwise would. Do you submit to the Holy Spirit as you spend time with your family? Often it is family members who are most difficult to love, and we need the Spirit’s help to love them well.

I think we have a strong tendency to attempt to wrestle control from the Spirit and “do” this life on our own. We tend to switch from living the gospel of grace to trusting in a system of works.