

Philippians 2:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Analysis

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (θεὸς γάρ ἐστιν ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ τὸ θέλειν καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας, theos gar estin ho energōn en hymin kai to thelein kai to ergein hyper tēs eudokias)—Gar ("for") grounds v. 12: you work out salvation because God works in you. Ho energōn (present participle, "the one working") indicates continuous divine activity. En hymin ("in you") locates God's work internally. The scope: kai to thelein kai to ergein ("both to will and to work")—God produces both desire (willing) and action (working).

Hyper tēs eudokias ("according to His good pleasure") identifies God's sovereign purpose as motive. This verse balances v. 12's human responsibility with divine enablement—the classic Reformed tension between God's sovereignty and human agency. We work because God works; divine working doesn't eliminate but enables human working. Augustine summarized: "God's commands are not against grace; commands are fulfilled by grace." The phrase resolves potential misunderstanding: working out salvation isn't self-sufficient moralism but Spirit-dependent obedience.

Historical Context

This verse became central in Augustinian-Pelagian debates (5th century) over grace and free will. Pelagius emphasized human ability; Augustine emphasized divine grace enabling human response. Philippians 2:12-13 holds both: genuine human responsibility (work out) and absolute divine priority (God works in you).

Reformation theology (sola gratia) drew heavily on this balance. Monergism (God alone saves) and synergism (God and humans cooperate) find nuance here.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do you hold together God's sovereign work 'in you' and your responsibility to 'work out' salvation?
2. Can you identify God's work in you producing both desire (willing) and ability (doing)?
3. How does knowing God produces your willing and working change your approach to obedience?

Interlinear Text

τῆς	θεὸς	γάρ	ἐστιν	τῆς	ἐνεργεῖν	ἐν	ὑμῖν	καὶ	τῆς
which	God	For	it is	which	to do	in	you	and	which
G3588	G2316	G1063	G2076	G3588	G1754	G1722	G5213	G2532	G3588

θέλειν	καὶ	τῆς	ἐνεργεῖν	ὑπὲρ	τῆς	εὐδοκίας
to will	and	which	to do	of	which	his good pleasure
G2309	G2532	G3588	G1754	G5228	G3588	G2107

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 13:21 (Good): Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

2 Corinthians 3:5 (References God): Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

2 Timothy 1:9 (Parallel theme): Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

Romans 9:16 (References God): So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

1 Corinthians 15:10 (References God): But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

John 3:27 (Parallel theme): John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

Ephesians 1:11 (Parallel theme): In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

1 Corinthians 12:6 (References God): And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

Ephesians 1:5 (Good): Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

2 Thessalonians 1:11 (Good): Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: