

CHRIST PLUS ZERO

Christ plus nothing is more than Christ plus something.

A man shouted out after a church service, “You people are religious phonies, materialistic, hypocrites! If you people love God, you should rid yourselves of your smart cars and fancy houses and give your wealth to the poor and serve God in poverty like Jesus did!”

This man's view of spirituality was a demonstration of the belief that we have to deny ourselves of all materialistic comforts and possessions to be spiritual.

ASCETICISM (An ascetic is one who lives in self-denial.)

This false deceptive philosophy is known as legalism. To be closer to God and to become more spiritual you have to sacrifice things that are physical and material.

WARNING

Paul warned believers of the dangers of ascetism—**Colossians 2:20-23** “*Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.*”

Self-sacrifice is a choice, not a means to salvation or holiness. Ascetism is an attempt to accomplish what Christ Jesus has accomplished for us by us expending energy of the flesh to attain spirituality.

Page 2/....

DIED WITH CHRIST

In **Colossians 2:20** “*Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules*”.

We are reminded that we are no longer in bondage to beliefs and practices that purport to make us more acceptable through abstinence. Self-styled denialism elevates the flesh which leads to moral failure. This failure is prevalent in fanatical and ultra-extreme practises.

CHRIST PLUS NOTHING!

We must hold fast to Christ’s sufficiency, never adding to it or taking from it. In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—**Colossians 2:3** “*..in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*”. In Him dwells all the fullness of deity in bodily form **Col.2:9** “*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form*”. We have been made complete in Him **Col 2:10** “*....and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.*” And nothing can ever separate us from Him—**Romans 8:35-39**. What more do we need?

John McArthur Jnr says:

Some years ago I was invited to present the Gospel to a group of actors and actresses at a Hollywood hotel. That was a different environment for me, but I was thankful for the opportunity to present Christ to them. I talked for about forty-five minutes, then challenged the people to trust Christ for salvation.

Afterward a young man came up to me and shook my hand. He was very handsome actor from India, who had come to Hollywood seeking stardom. He said to me, “Your speech was fascinating and compelling. I want Jesus Christ in my life.” I was thrilled and suggested we go into a little side room where we would have privacy to talk together and pray.

We made our way to the room and sat down. Then he said to me, “I am Muslim. I’ve been a Muslim all my life. Now I want to have Christ.” I was somewhat overwhelmed because I had never led a Muslim to Christ and I didn’t expect one to respond so easily to the Gospel. I explained in more details what it means to open one’s heart to Christ, then suggested we pray together.

As we knelt, he invited Jesus into his life. Then I prayed for him and we stood up. I was excited and he was smiling and he shook my hand firmly. But then he made a tragic revealing statement: “Isn’t it wonderful? Now I have two religions, Christianity and Islam.”

Saddened by his obvious misunderstanding of the Gospel, I carefully explained to him that Christianity doesn’t work that way. Jesus isn’t someone you simply add to whatever other religion you choose. You must turn from error to embrace Him as Lord alone—**1 Thess.1:9**. Jesus Himself said, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other,” **Matt.6:24**. You give up every other master to gain Christ, who is the pearl of great price (**vs13:44-46**). He takes all of you, and you receive all of Him (**vs16:24-26**).

Are you resting and trusting in the sufficiency of Christ?

Is Christ everything to you? If so, thank Him for His fullness. If not, perhaps you've been trusting in failing, deceptive, inept, human wisdom; meaningless religious rituals; or some kind of mystical experience formed in your own mind and unrelated to reality. Maybe you've been thinking of your own self-denial or self-imposed pain that will somehow gain favour with God. If that's the case, put it all aside and in simple childlike faith embrace the risen Christ as your Lord and Saviour. He will give you complete salvation, complete forgiveness and complete victory. All you need in the spiritual dimension for time and eternity is found in Him. Repent of your sin and submit yourself to Him!

DIVINE AND HUMAN SYNERGY

The word synergy means two energies working together in tandem. In Christ we are complete. It's a Divine work (Divine energy), but we need to work out (practice) what God has worked in us—**Phill.2:12-13** *“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 in order to fulfill his good purpose.”*

QUIETIST & PIETISM

- **A Quietist** is one who believes that being a Christian means that you do nothing, you simply rely on God to do it all. This is a passive faith attitude. (I don't need to pray, study, serve or involve myself in active service).
- **A Pietist** is one who practises extreme dressing codes, diets and rituals to demonstrate how “holy they are”. The monastery inmates are victims of piety.

OUR PART—WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION

The main thrust of **Philippians 2:12** is the phrase “work out your salvation.” The Greek verb translated “work” (katargazomai) is a present tense imperative verb, and could be translated, “keep on continually making the effort to work out your salvation.” That's the Christian's part in sanctification.

Some have mistakenly concluded that working out our salvation means we must earn it, that is, work for or toward it. Work out means to live out your faith. But clearly salvation is *“the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast,” Eph 2:8-9.*

**Work out your
own salvation
with FEAR and
TREMBLING**

**For it is God Who works in you
both to will and to do
for His good pleasure**

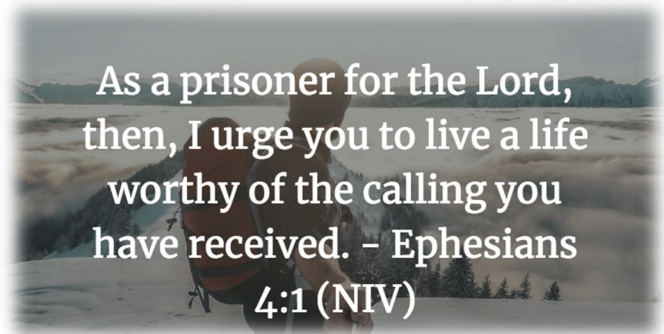
Philippians 2:12-13

Further, Paul said, *“By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified... For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus... For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law,”* **Rom 3:20, 23-24, 28.**

“Work out your salvation” is not a command for unbelievers to work for their salvation. It is a call to believers for sustained effort and diligence in holy living based on the Divine resources within them—**Phil.2:13**,.

Scripture is replete with such injunctions. For example **Romans 6:19** says, *“I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness.”*

2 Cor.7:1 says *“Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”* Paul said to the Ephesians—**Ephesians 4:1**, *“Walk in a manner worthy of the calling...,”* and he detailed how to accomplish that **V2-3** *“...Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one. I do not say this to condemn you; I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you.”*



In **Colossians 3:5-17** he gives a list of injunctions that imply our responsibility to cultivate spiritual discipline and holy living.

The command to work out our salvation also speaks of striving toward a goal, or bringing something to fulfilment, fullness or completion, just as you might “work out” a difficult problem or a pianist might “work out” a difficult phrase or sonata. The expression speaks of resolving something, perfecting it, or bringing it to completion. Paul wanted the Philippians to push their salvation to perfection in Christlikeness. When he speaks of salvation, he is seeing the fullness of its fruition, urging the Philippians to press on to that goal.. In other words, the sense of Paul’s message is not *“work for your salvation,”* but *“work on your salvation”* in the sense of moving toward faith’s consummation in glory. The elect are diligently to pursue holiness until Christ returns.

Holiness is separation in belief and behaviour.