

GOD'S WORK IN OUR WILLS AND HEARTS

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." – Phil. 2:12,13.

IN EVERY instance where the Apostles use the word we, they evidently refer to the New Creation, the spiritual New Creatures in Christ. When St. Paul says, "Work out your own salvation," he is addressing the Church, not the world. The world is not now on trial for salvation. "Work out your own salvation; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do." But when addressing the New Creature we are to remember that the personality is still maintained. For instance, the Apostle says, "Ye were bought with a price" – before you became New Creatures. It is the same ego, the same personality as before.

In the words, "It is God that worketh in you," the Apostle does not mean that God began to work in you when you were bought, but it means that from before the time of your begetting and quickening He has done so; for as the Scriptures elsewhere say, we were drawn of God, and we were called of God, before our consecration.

GOD THE MAGNET TO LOVERS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

God is represented as the great Magnet, drawing all who love righteousness. He drew us before we became Christians at all – the truth and righteousness of our Heavenly Father was the magnet. Man having been originally created in God's image and likeness, a measure of this image and likeness still remains. And to whatever extent the natural man loves righteousness and truth and mercy, he has something that is approved of by God, who is the great Center of Righteousness, Justice, Truth and Mercy.

Some of humanity have fallen so low that the drawing power of the Magnet has very little influence upon them. In others of our fallen race there is a larger measure of our Lord's character-likeness remaining. Such as have some love for righteousness, some degree of mercy, would realize a drawing toward the great Heavenly Father. Perhaps every one of us who are disciples of Christ felt something of that drawing before we came to the Father at all. The Lord Jesus says, "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which sent Me draw him." So we must first be drawn of the Father.

But God has appointed only one Way for us to come unto Him – and this Way is Christ. Those who desire to come unto God, then, must come by this Way, and must learn the terms upon which they may come. They are told that they can come only by humbling themselves, and sacrificing self. "If any man will be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." So the Lord puts the barrier there, and none will come in except those who have a real, earnest desire. In the next Age, God has something to offer the rest of mankind. He will deal with them under different conditions. But now He is not looking for those who are merely *feeling* after Him.

To those who seek the Lord there comes the question, **[R5303 : page 264]** Do you love God and righteousness? Will you surrender all human will and preference, and accept instead the Divine will? If they accept these terms, then they will become Jesus' disciples. If they say, No, I cannot go so far as that! then they cannot become His disciples. As one minister said not long since, "I have not taken my consecration so seriously as that yet." So it is with a good many. They would like to go to Heaven on flowery beds of *ease*.

But those who make a full consecration of their lives, who through Christ come into vital relationship with the Father, are New Creatures. Does God cease to work in them after this step has been taken? No. God has provided further ways by which He works in

them. It is the spirit of character-likeness to God – their love of righteousness – that so worked in them that they were willing to give up their earthly rights. That is a powerful working. God thus first works in us to will. All that we did, then, was to give ourselves to Him, through Christ. We willed that we would give ourselves up to God, if He would receive us. And He did receive us.

THREE WAYS OF DETERMINING GOD'S WILL

We receive the instruction to know the will of God through His Word, through His providences, and through all the experiences of life, in order that we may both will and do His good pleasure. When we made our consecration we willed to do God's will. But we did not see that will fully. As we go on, we see His will more and more distinctly. And as we see the leadings of His providence in all the experiences of life, we become more and more imbued with His Spirit – the Holy Spirit. Thus God gradually works in us to *do*. The *willing* comes first, then the quickening, energizing, *doing*.

The power that works in us to *do* is the same power that works in us to *will*. Can we *will* perfectly? Yes. Can we *do* perfectly? No. Why can we *will* perfectly and not *do* perfectly? Because the will of God has become *our* will, our mind. The Apostle says, "With the mind I myself serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom. 7:25.) The flesh has inherited various weaknesses and fallen tendencies; therefore we are unable to do perfect works, and the flesh continually needs the Robe of Christ's Righteousness.

We need continually that the great Redeemer shall be our great Advocate, that we may come with courage to the Throne of Heavenly Grace and find mercy and help in time of need. So God is working in the New Creatures, first to will and then to do His good pleasure. And every promise of God is to this end – not merely that we should *submit* to His will, but that we should rejoice to do His good pleasure, that we should delight to do His will at any cost. Thus shall we work out our own salvation and please our Heavenly Lord.

WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION

In order to appreciate our text we must study it in its proper setting, remembering that it is not addressed, as some people are inclined to suppose, to the world. It is addressed to a special class whose sins have been forgiven, and who through Christ have been brought into a special relationship with God, into the position of sons of God. And it is from this standpoint that they must work out their own salvation. Our salvation is to be [R5304 : page 264] brought unto us at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No one has salvation now except in a reckoned sense. In this sense we have been saved, and can draw near to the Father. But we are still under the general dominion of Sin and Death. We are not actually saved as yet. We must *work out* our salvation. In this text the Apostle is showing how it is to be done. He shows this further when he addresses the Church as *Beloved*. He would not thus address vile persons, or those who had no knowledge of Christ – who were either heathen or worse. The Epistle itself shows that he is addressing saints of God.

What kind of salvation is this of which the Apostle is speaking – that has to be worked out? It is not salvation in the general sense, out of sin and death back to human perfection, when conditions will all be favorable, when Satan will be bound for a thousand years, and when all the active influence of Messiah's Kingdom will be in operation. When the Apostle here says, "*your* salvation," he is particularizing the salvation peculiar to this Gospel Age – "*so great salvation.*" – Heb. 2:3.

As we enter more particularly into this matter, to see how great a salvation it is, we are more and more astonished at its depth and height. It is not merely a salvation from sin, but it is very much more. Not only is it to be everlasting, but it is a salvation to glory, honor and immortality, joint-heirship with Messiah in all the glorious things that are His in His exalted position, far above angels,

principalities and powers and every name that is named. (Eph. 1:21.) The wider our eyes of understanding open to see the length and breadth and height and depth of this great salvation, the grander it appears. As we think of the possibility of obtaining it, we are filled with enthusiasm – and also with fear. For what if any of us should come short of so glorious a salvation – so high a calling!

The Apostle says, "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Heb. 4:1.) The slightest intimation that we are coming short of the glorious Divine standard should fill us with fear lest we miss the great salvation. This is not the fear of *torment*, begotten of ignorance and misunderstanding of God, such as the heathen have. They have a fear of God, a *dread* of God, which amounts to torment; as the Apostle John says, "Fear hath torment." But this kind of fear is cast out of us as we come to a knowledge of the Lord and are privileged to call Him Father. It is the holy fear that actuates us, altogether. We have no slavish fear, either of men or anything else. We belong to this special class, the *Beloved*, who have a special offer of a special kind of salvation.

OUR GREAT PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The expression, *Work out*, has a peculiar force and meaning. It suggests something that is difficult, that requires time and patience. The decision has already been made, or we would not be of this class. We settled the matter when we first made this determination. We have already presented our bodies living sacrifices. And now we are beloved sons of God; and this that we have undertaken lies before us. We see how our Master laid down His earthly life, and we see from the Scriptures that He is to be an Ensample to us. So we are to submit ourselves rejoicingly to all the providences of God – glad to have God's will done in us, whatever it may cost, whatever it may mean to sacrifice.

It is by painstaking care that we work out our great salvation. God has provided the way – made all the arrangements for us. There is nothing lacking, so far as God is concerned. The whole matter lies with ourselves. God has begotten us of the Holy Spirit. All the influences necessary for us are at our command, because at His command, because we have been called, because we have been accepted, because we have been introduced into His family through the merit of the great Advocate! [R5304 : page 265] And so much the more are we disposed to feel a sense of fear and trembling as we think of all this! There is this great position – glory, honor and immortality! The result lies in my own hands! There is not another person in the universe responsible for my success or failure but *myself!* *I* must gain that great prize! The Lord will not gain it for me. He will merely assist me in the performing of this great Covenant.

So it is very proper for us to have *this* fear, a realization of the fact that we are each making history for eternity. We are to be either on the great plane of glory, the Divine nature, or else on a lower plane, as the Levites; or we may go into the Second Death, and lose everything, from which there will be no recovery.

THE WORK DONE IN OUR HEARTS

As we realize these facts, it is no wonder that we tremble and fear, and feel our need of walking, as the Apostle says, *circumspectly*, and of weighing our thoughts, so as to be in conformity to the will of God in Christ. This is indeed a condition that might be called *fear and trembling*. It is a condition of great earnestness. There is no room for foolishness here, or lightness, or frivolity. God is testing every power we possess to see whether we know what we have said in our consecration vow, to prove whether we were sincere and meant it all, to prove whether to any extent we overstated ourselves and did not *mean* entire devotion to Him.

If we were not wholly in earnest about this matter, then we shall show it. God has done His part in making all the conditions and in accepting us. Now everything is for us to work out. Surely we should have fear and trembling as we remember this. We know that it is God that is working in us. God Himself has begun a work in us. None of the angels ever had such a work take place in their hearts. None of the angels had the offer of this salvation.

We who were of the Adamic family are being transformed and developed along the lines which the Father has marked out for us, that He may make of us a New Creation. It is He that *first* worked in us, through all His providences, to *will*. And then, after we had presented our bodies living sacrifices, He worked in us to *do* – not that we could do perfect works according to the flesh; God knew we could not, and is not expecting perfection in the flesh. But He is expecting *perfect heart intentions*. He says, My child has had the imperfections of the flesh to contend with, and by his good warfare with these he has shown his obedience to My will. If by and by I shall give to this child a perfect body, a spirit body, in the resurrection, then I am sure he will do My will. My Spirit has worked in him to will, and is now working in him to do. And he is showing Me, by doing to the best of his ability under present conditions, what he will do with a perfect body. Sown in weakness, this New Creature will be raised in power; sown a natural body, it will be raised a spirit body. – I Cor. 15:42-44.

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