

## HOW WE OUTWORK OUR GREAT SALVATION

**"Beloved, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." – Philippians 2:12,13.**

IN THIS chapter from which our text is taken, the Apostle Paul pays a beautiful tribute to the Church at Philippi. He refers in tender and loving terms to their obedience always to his instruction and counsel, not only when he was present with them, but likewise in his absence. He urges them to continued faithfulness and earnestness in this good way. He desires that they make still further progress in the Master's likeness, working out in themselves through humility and obedience the character-development necessary, with fear and trembling, doing their own part in the attainment of the salvation to which they had been called in Christ.

This exhortation of St. Paul is designed likewise for the sanctified in Christ Jesus of today. He reminds us, as he did the Philippian Church, that we are to *work out* our salvation. Elsewhere the Scriptures inform us that our salvation is by grace – that "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by *His mercy* He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5.) These Scriptures are not contradictory. Our salvation is "not of ourselves, lest any man should boast." The Father has appointed the Lord Jesus to be our Savior; and it is through Him that our salvation is to be accomplished.

We cannot work out our own justification; but being justified by the blood of Christ and being called with the Heavenly Calling, we can do our share in this great work of our own preparation for our future station and glory. We do this by giving heed to the instructions of our Lord, by following the example which He has set us. We can never attain perfection in the flesh; but from the beginning our heart,

our intention, must be wholly loyal, and day by day this heart intention must become more and more crystallized, fixed, in the way of righteousness. We must continue the work of bringing our body into subjection, and enlisting in the service of the Lord.

## HOW WE BECOME SONS OF GOD

It is encouraging for us to know that this warfare is not one which we must wage alone. All the powers of Heaven are enlisted on our behalf. Our God has led us thus far in the willing and the doing of His good pleasure, and He will continue thus to lead and help us and work in us by His Word of Truth, if we continue to give heed to His counsel. The Gospel is the "power of God unto salvation unto every one" who accepts it; and no greater stimulus can be found than the exceeding great and precious promises given unto us, that by these we might become "partakers of the Divine nature."

Our salvation is a salvation from death to life, from sin to righteousness. Moreover, it is a transformation [R5854 : page 55] from human nature to Divine – our "*so great* salvation!" The initiatory step to our salvation was the work accomplished by our Lord Jesus at Calvary. "He died for our sins." This dying for our sins was first necessary; for there was no one on earth who could pay the penalty of Adam's sin. The Law of God required "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a man's life for a man's life." There was no man perfect; hence God arranged that His Only Begotten Son should meet this death penalty upon man. The Father could have arranged it otherwise, but He did not; therefore we know that this was the best way.

The *death* of Christ, however, was not all that was necessary. "He *rose* again for our justification." His death was for the cancelation of our sins; but it could not effect our justification while He was still in the bonds of death – not until He had risen – and more, not until He had ascended up on High – and more, not until He had presented His merit on our behalf – on behalf of the Church. Still

more than this, our justification is not accomplished until, in each individual case, the necessary steps of faith and full consecration have been taken, as a result of which the merit of our Redeemer is imputed.

This merit of Christ has not as yet been presented for the world, because their time has not yet come. Thus far it has been presented only for the Church – those who are called to be joint-heirs with Christ, and who accept the Call. When Jesus appeared in the presence of God for *us*, there was an arrangement then effected by which we might become justified. There are certain inflexible conditions upon which God is willing to impute this merit of Christ's death. It is those only who wish to turn away from sin, to be justified from sin, and to serve God, to whom this favor is offered. Only these can now become sons of God.

Whether these steps take years or days or a few minutes, all these steps must be taken before we are in the place where we can be accepted of Christ and presented by Him to the Father. When our Redeemer imputes to us His merit, covering our blemishes, this brings us to the place of vital justification. We have done nothing to accomplish this justification. We have merely presented ourselves that we might become servants of **[R5855 : page 55]** righteousness. We have merely placed ourselves in the position of readiness to receive the blessing. When our Savior's merit was thus imputed, all our past was forgiven, our blemishes covered, the Father accepted the offering, and our High Priest sacrificed us as justified human beings. At that moment we were begotten of the Father by His Holy Spirit, "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us." (1 Peter 1:4.) We became embryo New Creatures, who were then to grow and develop day by day until, in due time, we would be born as spirit beings on the Divine plane, if faithful unto death.

**THE MARVELOUS GRACE OF GOD!**

This is a wonderful work, a marvelous transformation! Selected from a race of bondslaves of sin, beings of a fleshly nature, depraved, death-stricken, sin-cursed, we are lifted out of the miry clay; we are washed, cleansed, from our pollution, our soiled rags of unrighteousness, and a new nature has been begun in us. Then our earthward tendencies are gradually bent Heavenward. We are transformed day by day, rising *up*, UP, until, our resurrection completed, the work of transformation fully accomplished, we are exalted to heights unimaginable – passing the nature and rank of angels, of cherubim, of seraphim, and every name that is named, and seated upon Messiah's Throne, beside the Infinite Son of God, partakers of His glorious nature – the nature of Jehovah Himself – the Divine nature!

Can mortal man conceive so marvelous a glory? The very thought of such a Calling should cause us to bow our hearts in the dust before our God, realizing our great unworthiness of such stupendous grace – of bliss so transcendent! What can we render unto the Lord that can fittingly demonstrate our gratitude, our thankfulness, for so unspeakable a favor? Surely, the most faithful service we can give is but a very feeble return to Him who has so loved us, so blessed us, so honored us!

We are joint-heirs with the Lord of Glory to this wonderful inheritance, if only we are faithful unto death and keep our garments white. To us "old things have passed away, and all things have become new." As old creatures we had no standing with God; we were feeding on the beggarly elements of the world. We were dead in trespasses and in sins. It is only as New Creatures that we have any standing, that we can please God, that we can work for Him. It is this New Creature that the Apostle is addressing in our text.

### **OUR GREAT RESPONSIBILITY**

As we have made a consecration of ourselves to God, our sins are all under the blood, and the new life has begun in us. We are

under a solemn contract to see that the work of transformation steadily progresses. When the Father accepted our offering and our vows to Him, and granted us His Holy Spirit, He did not give us the full consummation of our hopes, but merely an "earnest of our inheritance." Our agreement was to be dead to the world, dead to earthly things, and alive toward God. It is therefore for each of us to demonstrate in our words, in our actions, in our thoughts, that everything in this contract is bona fide on our part – that we *meant* every word of it. When we become children of God, our one ambition should be to prove our loyalty to God, our loyalty to our Covenant of Sacrifice. Was it not so with our Lord Jesus?

Our Lord came into the world to be our Redeemer. But He was not the Redeemer when He was born, nor when He was thirty years of age, until He made His consecration. He was called the Savior from His birth, only in a prospective sense. He became our Redeemer in the real, the official, sense when He was baptized of John in Jordan, and the Holy Spirit came upon Him in begetting power. Then it remained for Him during the three and a half years of His active service to work out that consecration. Every act of life during that crucial period was the fulfilling of His Covenant of Sacrifice. He had covenanted to sacrifice His human nature with all its conditions and possibilities, in order that He might carry out the Father's purpose. For this cause He came into the world, and He faithfully fulfilled His Covenant. His glorious reward was the Divine nature and the authority to execute all the Father's great Program.

### **OUR COVENANT IDENTICAL WITH CHRIST'S**

And so it is to be with us, His followers. We come in under the same arrangement, our weaknesses and imperfections being covered by our Redeemer's robe of righteousness, which constitutes our "wedding garment." Thus we stand before the Father complete in the Beloved. And His Word to us is, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9.) All

the children of God who are true to their covenant are working out their salvation from day to day. It is a work of sacrifice, a daily work of crucifixion of the flesh. From the beginning of our consecrated life we are reckoned as being fully "crucified with Christ"; but the actual crucifixion is a slow, painful, lingering process, and ends only with the completion of our sacrifice in death.

"Gather my saints together unto Me, those who have [R5855 : page 56] made a covenant with Me by sacrifice," is the command of Jehovah. (Psalm 50:5.) To what extent are we performing this work of sacrifice in ourselves? And to what extent are we seeking to assist in the work of gathering the saints of God unto Him? Are we faithful to the extent of our ability and opportunity? Are we sure that we are careful to *note* the opportunities, great or small, that are within our reach? If we do not see our opportunities, the Lord will use another to do the work that might have been ours; and we shall lose the blessing and the reward of the service that we might have rendered. How careful, then, we should be!

### **"PAY THAT WHICH THOU HAST VOWED"**

But this is not a matter in which we are to judge one another. It is not for me to say to you that you are not sufficiently earnest in your sacrificing. Neither can you properly say to me that I am not faithfully fulfilling my sacrifice. To his own Master each one stands or falls. It is for the Lord and ourselves to settle this important matter in our individual cases. And we may not fully judge even ourselves. We are to strive to do our best, and then leave the results for the Lord's determining. The Father will apportion to each faithful member of our Lord's Body his own place in the glorious Temple.

The brethren may give a word of suggestion to each other along these lines, but that is all. The Lord alone is to decide whether or not we are each living up to the terms of our covenant. He expects faithfulness in each one who has taken His Covenant upon him. It were far better that we never covenant to sacrifice our earthly life and

its interests than that we take this vow upon us and then fail to pay that which we have vowed. (Ecclesiastes 5:4-6.) This is a most solemn matter, and the Lord will certainly require of us the fulfilment of our vows. If death is not voluntary, He will destroy our flesh. If we resist this, it will mean the hopeless death of our being.

## **OUR FAITHFUL, UNCHANGEABLE GOD**

"It is God who worketh in you," declares the Apostle Paul. We did not begin this work ourselves. It would never have occurred to us, uninvited, to endeavor to obtain a share in the glory, honor and immortality of the Lord Jesus. It would have been the height of presumption for us so to do without an express invitation. It is God who planned the whole matter. He has been working in us by His promises, by His providences in our daily experiences, and by all the instructions, warnings and counsels of His Word, and we rejoice in this. There is no changeableness with God; and when once He made this proposition, He meant it to the full. It would never mean anything else. He never makes an arrangement which He would wish to abrogate or amend.

We are assured by the Apostle Paul that "He who has begun the good work in us will complete it, unto the Day of Jesus Christ." The only condition is *our own* faithfulness. **God** will never fail. "We are His workmanship." He is really doing the work. We are submitting ourselves that God may work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. He is the great Master Workman. Thus the work of grace goes on in our hearts and lives, making us ready for the exalted position to which we are called. And it is only if we are negligent of these great privileges granted to us that God will take them from us and give them to others.

Those who are constructing a fine building need special power to accomplish the work – to hoist the great steel frames, the blocks of stone, the brick, etc. Now God purposes to furnish the power by which we may accomplish the work on our character-building, this

wonderful structure we are setting up. But the Lord will not accomplish this great work in us unless we diligently cooperate with Him. He gave us the calling, the inspiration, and furnishes all the necessary assistance day by day; so we are to persevere in the building of this character which is essential and which He purposes shall be in all those whom He will make joint-heirs with His Son.

### **"DO ALL THINGS WITHOUT MURMURINGS"**

In following in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus, we are not to *murmur* by the way, finding fault with its difficulties and its narrowness; nor are we to dispute how or where we are to be led, nor to seek to have any other way than that which Divine providence marks out for us, realizing and trusting that the Lord knows exactly [R5856 : page 56] what experiences are necessary to our development in the character-likeness of Christ. We should realize also that if obedience were possible while our mouths are full of complaints and dissatisfaction with the Lord and with our lot, which He has permitted, it would indicate that we are out of sympathy with the spirit of His arrangement.

Such an obedience, if it were possible – and it is not – would not meet the Divine approval nor gain us the prize. Hence, as the Apostle exhorts, we should "do all things without murmurings and disputings, that we may be the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of Life."

### **HOW WE ARE TO FEAR AND TREMBLE**

In the expression of our text – "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" – we are not to understand that the Lord wishes His children literally to tremble with fear before Him. We should exercise the same judgment in interpreting the words and expressions of Scripture that we would in reading any other book, or in understanding the words of our friends. One called to a position of



great responsibility will sometimes say afterwards, "I accepted that position with fear and trembling." He would not mean that he actually quaked with fear; but this is an expression used to indicate that one feels the need of great carefulness – that he realizes his great responsibility and his liability to fail to meet all the requirements without the most earnest attention. It means that one realizes that the matter is not one to be taken up lightly, as if it were a mere bagatelle, but that failure in it would bring serious consequences.

Just so when we read this Scripture, we are not to think that we should tremble with fear before our God; but we believe the Apostle's thought to be that in this great work that we have undertaken – of walking in the footsteps of Jesus that we may attain the prize of our High Calling – *so much* depends upon our faithfulness, our diligence. We have not undertaken a light thing. It is a very heavy responsibility. Our eternal interests are in the balance – the issue of life or death. Those who win the prize will be heirs of God to the highest honors and glories which have ever been offered – to a glory and honor beyond human power to imagine! We believe that no such offer will ever again be made.

The Son of God holds the position next to Jehovah, and can never have but one Bride. Surely, then, there is need that we work out our salvation with fear and trembling – with great carefulness, with great earnestness, in respect to everything in connection with it! We should be keenly appreciative of the fact that it is the most wonderful thing in all the Universe of God! We believe that if we do not make our calling and election sure and win in this fight within a very brief time now, the opportunity will be gone forever. No amount of **[R5856 : page 57]** wailing and gnashing of teeth will then avail. When the door is shut, it will never open again. Like Esau, those who fail will find "no place for repentance," though they seek it "carefully with tears." The glorious birthright will have slipped from their grasp forever.

But, beloved fellow-laborers, who are earnestly striving day by day to "so run as to obtain," "we are persuaded better things of you, though we thus speak." But it is well that we have our "pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance," that we may keep our eyes upon the Heavenly City and the prize set before us. The wearisome march will, we believe, soon be ended. At most it is only a *little while*. And so, with steadfast hearts, let us run with patience and perseverance to the end of our course.

"Joyful through hope, thy motto still must be –  
The Dawn is here!  
What glories does that Dawn unfold to thee!  
Be of good cheer!  
Gird up thy loins; bind sandals on thy feet!  
The way was dark and long; the end is sweet."

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