

HUMAN WORKS VS. WORKS OF THE NEW CREATURE

"Beloved, 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."--`Philippians 2:12,13`

OUR text is not an exhortation to the world. The Apostle is not urging natural men to work out their own salvation. The exhortation is to the Church of Christ alone, the "beloved," as St. Paul calls them. According to many theologians this advice would seem strange, because of the commonly accepted belief that a person is saved as soon as he becomes one of the Lord's people. To this we agree in part--"we are saved by hope." (*Romans 8:24*) But the actual salvation we have not yet attained. It will not be attained until we shall have experienced the "change" of the First Resurrection. Up to that time there is always a possibility of our leaving the faith, being turned away from the faith--away from seeking to follow on faithfully to the attainment of the Lord's ultimate will concerning us. This salvation to the High Calling is to be **worked out** by the development of character.

God has promised that certain characters shall attain to the highest place in His gift, the chief place of exaltation and favor, to be partakers of His own Divine nature. The Scriptures indicate that there are others who will attain to an inferior place--vessels unto lesser honor. (**2 Timothy 2:20,21**) So we see that we should be on the qui vive, on the alert, to win the very best offered, the attainment of which will be pleasing to God as well as being the best thing for ourselves. Those who have entered into a covenant with the Lord must attain spirit nature, either on the Divine plane or a lower one; else they will lose all and die the Second Death. We are called in **one hope** of our Calling--that of attaining the Divine nature. There has been no other call issued during the Gospel Age.

The question arises, Does this exhortation to work out our own salvation conflict with St. Paul's other statement, that our salvation "is not of works, lest any man should boast"? We reply, No; our salvation from death is entirely by faith. As **men** we have no opportunity of doing any works that would justify us before God. Until we have been accepted into God's family no works that we could do would be acceptable. God who is perfect, is not pleased to receive anything imperfect, either works or anything else. But when we have received the forgiveness of our sins--not by works, but by faith--and have become sons of God, through consecration and Spirit-begetting, then comes the time when we can do acceptable works; for we are then members of the Lord's family, and the Holy Spirit within us through this begetting now has an opportunity to show itself, to do some works. In other words, as imperfect human beings, we cannot work out our salvation; but as New Creatures we can do this.--*Philippians 4:13*.

OUR PART OF THE WORK

If after its begetting the New Creature never became active, it would never develop strength and character, just as a child would not develop if it never moved its limbs. We receive the Holy Spirit at the time of the Lord's acceptance of us, at our consecration. But this New Creature germ cannot long remain quiet. It must grow through nourishment, through feeding. At first we "desire the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby." (*1 Peter 2:2*) We become strong by the

exercise of ourselves as New Creatures. But it is God who started the new life in us. All our studying would not have made New Creatures of us; no amount of works would have done it. These things would never have brought us into the Lord's family; but after we have come into His family through the Lord Jesus, these good works will begin to show.

The New Creature takes over the old body as its possession, to be its servant. Legally, the old body is dead, having been slain as a sacrifice. But actually, we still have it in lieu of our new body, that it may serve us until the New Creature is sufficiently developed to be given its resurrection body, and until our work here is done. It is the possession of this old, imperfect body that makes it necessary for us to wear the robe of Christ's righteousness while we remain in the flesh. (*Job 29:14; Isaiah 61:10; Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27*)

The New Creature masters its old body, gets more and more control of the old disposition of the flesh. This may be more manifest to our neighbors and friends, and to our brethren, than to ourselves. The Father works in us as New Creatures, through Christ. And as we as New Creatures exercise ourselves in the control of the flesh, we become strong. Thus, as the Apostle says, we more and more become copies of God's dear Son. "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do His good pleasure, (*Philippians 2:13*)" and as we thus **will** and **do**, we accomplish our salvation. The Apostle is speaking here, not about the natural man, but of the "beloved" class, and is explaining that God wishes us to know that now, as we are His sons, He is working in us to accomplish His will.

GOD'S PART A GREAT WORK

There is a work that God did for us before we ever could have come into Christ--a great and important work. That work was the purchasing of us through the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus, and the arrangement by which the knowledge of this reaches us. Through the circumstances, incidents, affairs of our lives He showed us the way by which we might become His children through full consecration. All this is the work of God, and in the Scriptures is called drawing and calling. "No man can come unto Me except the Father which sent Me draw him," (*John 6:44, 65*) said the Master. It is the Father who draws, but by way of the Son. Then we are **called** with a "Heavenly Calling." After we have accepted the Call upon the Lord's terms, there is a work to be done in us-- a great work. And God is doing this work.—*Hebrews 3:1*

Elsewhere the Apostle says of this class, "Ye are God's workmanship." (*Ephesians 2:10*) Our Lord Jesus says of these, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." (*John 15:5*) The Father is the great Husbandman. It is for God to prune the branches of the Vine, to give them all the experiences requisite to their fruit-bearing. We all need pruning to develop the best of which we are capable as New Creatures, and to prove what we shall be qualified for.

So God's work in us progresses. He works through the world, through the brethren, through all the varied experiences of life, and through His precious promises. In proportion as we love God, we get the good out of our experiences. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to the called according to His purpose." (*Romans 8:28*) If we **know** this, we shall receive in the spirit of submission and trust all that comes to us. The Lord continues to feed us upon His Word. Our progress is a matter of gradual development--a growing in grace, a growing

in knowledge, a growing into God's character-likeness. Thus He works in His children to will and to do His good pleasure. He shows us more and more what His good pleasure **is**. Whoever becomes a child of God realizes later on more clearly than when he made his consecration what **is** the will of God, the mind of God. He comes to see things from an altogether different angle from his viewpoint when he first entered upon the narrow way.

As the Lord works in us through His various providences, etc., we are to accept these nourishments for the New Creature, appropriating them to ourselves, that we may grow thereby-- grow in strength of character, and thus be prepared for the Kingdom, for the glory, honor, immortality awaiting us if faithful. Of course, these great blessings and honors will not be given us unless we become such characters as the Lord will approve. The Apostle exhorts us to remember that what is to be reckoned on is, How much as a New Creature have you done in battling against the weaknesses of the flesh, in overcoming unfavorable surroundings? How fully have you really developed the likeness of Christ in your character?