

THE WORKER'S WORKERS

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10.

Salvation and service are matters of tremendous importance. On both subjects there is much false teaching. Because some have false ideas about salvation they have wrong ideas about service. God's Word teaches that salvation is not the work of self, the work of men or the work of a church. Salvation starts with God and is effected through Christ. Our text traces the whole process of salvation back to the eternal purpose of God.

I. The Worker.

This verse presents the Divine Worker. "We are his workmanship." In our thinking of salvation and service we must begin with God. The very idea of salvation had its origin in God. Salvation was conceived, planned, provided and perfected by Him. God is the source of salvation. His grace is the active principle that makes salvation possible on the condition of faith in Christ. Since salvation did not originate in any human mind or heart, it certainly does not depend on any human power. God is the worker.

II. The Workmanship.

"We are his workmanship." "His handiwork are we." Every Christian is the handiwork of God. We were created by Him. We were made new spiritual creatures by Him. Man is the product of the highest possible activity on the part of the Creator. He is the crowning touch of God's earthly creation. He is one of God's poems.

What is a poem? A poem is the finest product of the finest mind. A poem has always been appraised as the highest form of literature. Many writings come and go, but a true poem is as fresh after centuries as when it was first written. It is an enduring monument to him of whose mind the poem is an expression.

A poem is a creation of the poet. It is an absolute creation, something new and made of familiar materials, but in its combination it is the fruit of a creative spirit. In like manner, a Christian is a creation of God. He gave us our first consciousness of sin, taught us our need of a Saviour, caused us to have a desire to be saved and led us in our utter helplessness to receive Christ and eternal life. Salvation is not produced by man. It is not earned by man, but it is a gift from God. If works were the source of salvation, man would boast because he had earned his salvation. Salvation by grace glorifies God and that is why egotistical people do not like to hear it taught.

Doesn't it sound strange to refer to man as God's poem? A human life which has been so cheapened and abused as to be called a poem! Surely God's standard of values must be different from ours! What is the purpose of a poem? Why does a poet write a poem? A poem is a splendid way by which a poet lets others have a glimpse into his inner world. It is through his poems that one really comes to know a poet. So it is through His poems that God's innermost thoughts and feelings are made known.

What a noble conception of human life! A man or a woman is created in order to make known the thoughts of God. Have you ever thought of this aspect of your life? Has it ever occurred to you that God has chosen your life as an expression of His heart and character? One can see God in the beauty of nature around him. One can discern God behind the orderly method by which He governs the universe. But God's real thoughts are made visible in the life of a man or a woman.

III. The Way.

The way is expressed in the words "created in Christ Jesus." This is a clear reference to that inner experience of soul when one turns from sin by repentance toward God and faith in Christ for eternal life. It is the new life that comes into the soul when Christ enters. All that God does for us He does through Christ. Nobody has ever been saved apart from Christ. No man will ever be saved apart from Him.

Grace enlightens the understanding. It floods the mind with light. I cannot explain it fully. I only know what many of you have experienced, namely, that in spiritual matters I once was blind but now I see. There was a day when we could not understand certain things which are perfectly clear to us now. Saul of Tarsus, a distinguished scholar, a man of unusual mental capacity, a man versed in the law, familiar with the Old Testament, but without divine illumination, verily thought with himself that he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." That is why he had his part in stoning Stephen, and thereafter exceeded all others in his zeal for the extermination of those who were called Christians. But suddenly a light from heaven shone upon him, and in a second he learned more than he had during all of the time that he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel.

That sort of illumination is what men need today. There are people who try to learn things for which they have no capacity. They address themselves to the study of certain subjects, but they do not succeed because they do not have the capacity for understanding and mastering them. So, we are without capacity for spiritual things until God enlightens our understandings.

When the Holy Spirit illuminates the understanding one believes on Christ and is saved. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." The Lord is the One Who does the saving.

IV. The Workers.

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Those whom Christ has saved are to be workers with God and for Him. We have not been saved and called into a new life just to sit down and enjoy ourselves. The Lord has not saved us in order that we may talk about our good works, but that we may actually do them. Practical doing is far better than loud boasting. Christ has not saved us in order that we may do as we please, but to do what brings glory to Him. To talk about salvation without, as a result, becoming workers for the Lord is as foolish and as false as to teach salvation through human efforts. We are saved to serve, according to the plan and purpose which God has ordered. All of the children of God find most

wonderful counsel in the words of Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5). That is the only way in which any Christian can be eminently successful or happy. Children of God are to perform good works because they have been saved. Good works are the natural result of salvation. As we plant trees in order that they may produce fruit, so our Lord expects all whom He has saved to perform good works for Him. Such works are the dividends or fruits which the Lord gets from the salvation which He gives us.

V. The Works.

God's workers have their work appointed for them. It should make our hearts leap for joy in anticipation of entering upon His plan. Yielding our lives completely to the divine purpose is the prerequisite for receiving His plan for us. There would be little use for God to reveal His plan and program to us if we were not willing to accept and follow it. Unfortunately some believers doubt that God's will is best for them. They foolishly imagine that they can plan their own lives better than God can. Is not the all-wise God, Who made us and is thoroughly acquainted with our talents and limitations, better qualified to plan our future than we are? His plan for our lives is most assuredly the best one that is devisable. Do what He commands if you want to be a happy Christian. Exercise yourself in the things that God has ordained if you have a desire to be a useful Christian.

In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul effectively stated what should be our guiding principle of action throughout life. He said, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (10:31). "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." We ought to glorify Him here and now, and enjoy Him there and then. We will enjoy Him there and then in proportion to the measure in which we glorify Him here and now. How can we glorify Him by our works?

1. Through the praise that we offer.

"Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his way aright will I show the salvation of God" (Psalm 50:23).

Of this sort of thing we have a splendid illustration in the familiar story of the ten lepers. They were wandering on the outside of that Samaritan village, cut off from contact with their friends and loved ones, seeking to eke out a miserable existence as they slowly and painfully made their way to their graves. Christ came along and healed them. "And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, with a loud voice glorifying God." What was it that he did? "He fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan." "And Jesus answering said, Were not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?"

It would seem that it would be impossible for any man to be healed of so dreadful a disease as leprosy and not be grateful. But, even though they may have been grateful, only one of them glorified God; for only one returned to give thanks.

Are you glorifying God? If you are saved, surely you are grateful for your salvation. But are you expressing that gratitude and giving evidence of it in a life of praise? There is something wrong in the life of anybody who says, "Do I have to go to church?" No, you do not have to go to church any more than those nine lepers had to return to give thanks. But, if you want to glorify God, if you want to fulfill His purpose in your salvation, you will have to go and you will want to go. We glorify God through the praise that we offer.

2. Through the lives that we live.

Paul had been a terrible sinner. Not knowing Christ, he sought to punish or destroy all those who believed in Him. But God in mercy saved and transformed him. When men saw that, they glorified God. Paul said, "And they glorified God in me" (Galatians 1:24). God is glorified in a life that demonstrates His power.

Christ said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8). The fruit of the Christian life produced in us glorifies God. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace. When we possess and manifest that fruit we glorify God.

3. Through the service that we render.

Christ said, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). The accomplishment of the task glorified God. In the case of our Lord, it was a wonderful task. It was nothing less than the redemption of men. In my case, it is an humble task. But it is none the less His task for me, in the doing of which I can glorify Him.

Solomon's temple was built without the sound of a hammer heard in Jerusalem. The stones were all cut far away, then assembled and put in place. I can imagine some man far away cutting a rough stone and saying to himself, "Of what use is all this labor? Why take a piece of stone and carve it into a strange shape?" His depression was only because he did not know that an architect had planned a building; and that that stone, useless though it seemed, was an important part of that structure.

God is building a building of living stones, built upon the prophets and apostles, Christ Himself being the foundation. You and I are fashioning those living stones, and some day we shall see them fitted into the structure which is to glorify God. Where we are is God's place for us. If we are faithful in doing the task He has assigned us, He will accomplish His purpose through us and we will glorify Him.