

## NOT OF WORKS

### **Salvation: 'not of works'**

It is a matter of fact that the whole of the doctrine of the gospel of Christ is offensive to the natural man: the first-born nature of us each: that which is dead to God, dead in trespasses and sins.

And a main aspect of this doctrine which man will never stomach – and perhaps it is one of the last bastions to fall before one comes into a knowledge of salvation – is the truth that salvation is 'not of works': 'not of works, lest any man should boast'; 'not by works of righteousness which we have done' – it being a universal verity that those who 'go about to establish their own righteousness' do not, and cannot, submit themselves to the righteousness of God, Rom. 10:3.

These are absolute statements: salvation is 'not of works', full stop. And there is nothing like an absolute to destroy all arguments against it; for before an absolute there is no discussion to be had; it is what it is, being complete in and of itself: it is rigid, unyielding, unsentimental: it cannot exist in any other state: it cannot be compromised, is not open to persuasion to change or amend itself; an absolute cannot develop, mutate, or 'go with the times'. Therefore everything is stable, solid, and immutable with an absolute. Go back to its beginning and there it is, the same as it is today; follow it through to the end of time and find it yet unchanged. On absolute ground all is clear. Therefore, salvation is absolutely 'not of works'.

Now this is – and always has been – offensive to the natural man for the simple reason that since the Fall, as man has sought salvation, it has always been 'by works'. Of course this desire is natural to us: it is the way we think; for it is what we are in our very nature. That means that there is a part of us which exists in our consciousness at a level more fundamental to that level in which our thoughts and wills dwell: deep down in the very fibre of our soul, beyond the realm of our senses, is this basic nature; and it is *there* that we believe salvation to be of works.

But it has to be admitted here that there is another reason we think this way. Apart from believing salvation to be of works because of our fallen nature, we also think the same because of our upbringing. What do parents say to their children? 'If you're a good little boy you'll get...' 'No you can't... because you've been a naughty girl!' Works! How confusing it must be for children who go to chapels where the minister tells them that salvation is all of grace when often 'in real life' they experience the opposite doctrine of 'be good and get rewarded'!

Therefore it is no wonder that we like to put ourselves out to be 'good': comforting ourselves that we do a certain amount of 'good' from time to time. And there is a deep-seated reason for acting this way: *safety beyond death*. Some might say here, But not all in this world are religious; not all believe in God or an afterlife; many say they only believe in life *before* death; so they cannot be accused of doing good with the hope of heaven or reward after they die. Apparently so. But it is just not true. Because all *do* know – even if they will not admit to believing it – that there is a God, a judgment to come, and an afterlife; it is a knowledge built in to our very being as humans, as Romans 1:18-25 declares. So that deep down in each of us this knowledge exists, which brings forth this hope – however vague it might be – that if I do at least some 'good' in this life, if there is a hereafter – just in case there is – then hopefully 'God' will be pleased with me and I'll be all right.

This is the secret belief – the deep down secret belief – of every 'atheist'. And as for all the billions across the world who follow religions, worship gods, and believe other doctrines to what the Lord Jesus taught and revealed, works is uniformly the foundational tenant of their beliefs as well. So if we chant, light candles, burn incense; if we pray so many times a day; if we do sacrifice, deny ourselves, fast; if we evangelise, proselytise, and go on pilgrimage; if we build 'temples', develop forms of godliness and traditions of worship and perform ceremonies; all in all, *if we work*, then after death their understanding of what 'salvation' is will hopefully come to pass – or, at least, be well on the way to being attained.

But for all that, still, salvation is not of works. What is salvation? Well, as Jesus used the term 'born again', and Paul used the words 'a new creature' when describing the extent to which a man is changed when he is saved, then the saved man is one who has a new nature: a nature which has not existed before. Salvation, then, is not a refurbishment of the old man, a readjustment of what was before: making it somehow 'better' than it was before; and salvation is not the old man moving onto a higher plane of consciousness either; no; it is altogether 'a new creation'. A person who is 'born again of the Spirit of God' is one who has come into a completely new existence. In fact in salvation the 'old man' is said to have been 'crucified with Christ': and something crucified is that which has been put to death. So the new nature is totally different to what has previously died.

Therefore 'giving your heart to Jesus' is utterly futile, and finds no place in the doctrine of the gospel. What does the Saviour want with a fallen and corrupt heart! He has said that it is his work to take away – not to accept and then renew – the stony heart out of your flesh, and to give you an altogether new heart, cp. Ezek. 36:26. All those free-willers who love their 'simple gospel', and who preach such perverse things as 'letting Jesus into your heart', know absolutely nothing of the nature and condition of that heart. Christ will not come and dwell in corruption: in an unsanctified, sin-ridden heart. Who do they think he is! Someone like them?

Just reason it out. If salvation was of works, then it would be by works that the old man performs – like exercising 'faith' – to ensure his continued existence, albeit now in a 'saved' state. But that is not what is required in the salvation of a soul. The old man cannot be saved as such: it cannot be transformed. No. The man in sin must be judged, punished and damned because of his sin: he must die for it, and in it. After all, the wages of sin *is* death – another absolute statement. 'The soul that sinneth, *it shall die*'; no question about it: cause – effect.

Why else do you think the Lord Jesus had to *die* upon the cross? As he was himself 'without sin' then he should and would never have died. But die he did; so not for himself; no, his death was in the stead of his

people, who all must die in and because of their sin. Therefore he died *for* them: it was a substitutionary death; and as far as the Father is concerned when Christ died for his people it was actually their dying. Look at the cross and see your own death, child of God. It is there you were punished for your sin and sins; there you experienced eternal separation from God for your rebellion against him. But you weren't there! And you felt nothing! Jesus died and experienced it for you, but as you!

This is proof enough that the old man – the old heart – is not meant to be refurbished in salvation. It must die. And Jesus died to crucify the old man and thereafter, in his resurrection, to bring in something completely new; a new man; a man not to be born again of Adam, but of God! If salvation was of works – of the works of the old man – then Jesus' death upon the cross was needless. But as he *did* die, and effectually died for his people, then the truth is established: salvation is not of the works of the sinner. Work if you must; but if you continue to live, and then die, so doing, then you'll end up on the left hand on the day of judgment, and will receive the sentence of eternal damnation and torment from him whose death upon the cross you so despise by your working.

Therefore it should be a cause of immense relief and rejoicing to hear that salvation is 'not of works', for if it was then not a single son of Adam could ever be saved. The only 'work' that we can perform – as those born in sin and therefore naturally unrighteous – is to work wickedness, even though outwardly we judge that certain things we do are 'good'. As all our *righteousnesses* are said to be as 'filthy rags' before God – and he is the ultimate judge in these matters – then what can all our unrighteousnesses be classed as? No. If works are the criterion for being judged in the realm of salvation, then salvation is impossible to man; none can be saved; all will be lost.

Now, the fact that there are a lot of people in this world who do 'good' things does not disprove what has just been said. In fact it establishes it. Remember that we can produce what are called 'righteousnesses': outward actions which we judge to be good; but they are, before God,

unrighteousnesses. Why? Because God looketh upon the heart, and is not fooled – like us – by outward appearances. And what is the heart of man? Corrupt; desperately wicked; vile: the place from which springs all those things that defile a man, cp. Matt. 15:16-20.

Let us give a recent example of the apparently good, but actual unrighteous man. Until the news began to break here in Britain that Jimmy Saville was ‘a predatory paedophile’, more or less the whole nation, by way of the media – which teaches the general population how to think and judge – thought the former celebratory to have been a ‘good’ man. Tireless charitable work: millions raised for good causes: children’s entertainer, cheery personality, one who gave of his time and used his fame for the good of others and especially for the benefit of the less fortunate in society. But underneath the apparent goodness of the man lurked a corrupt and vile nature.

Now, before we vent our disgust towards him, and rise up in pride as we boast that we are not like him in the things that he did, just remember this: if Jimmy Saville is in hell now – and he will be in hell now unless in his latter days – unbeknown to us – the Lord in his mercy convicted him of his sin and applied the finished work of his Son to Saville’s pleading mercy for Christ’s sake – if he is in hell it will not be first and foremost because of his perverted lifestyle. No. He will be damned primarily because his nature was corrupt and fallen from his mother’s womb. That this corruption brought forth the fruit of heinous sins is only *his* fruit; our like corrupt nature brings forth *our* fruit: our sins which we like to indulge in.

You see, none of us is ‘better’ in and of ourselves than Saville. We are as wicked as he by nature. How that nature is manifest in us each by our own acts of sinning may differ from his, but still the apostles’ doctrine declares, ‘there is none righteous’: absolutely none. Regardless of the character, measure, ‘deviousness’ or otherwise of our sins, our sin – our very nature in and of itself which gives birth to sins – is enough to condemn us before God: in that sense our life of sinning is almost irrelevant.

But as to sinning itself; regardless of which sins you commit, or which commandments you break, the condemnation is that it is against the God who gave the commandments that you have sinned, cp. James 2:10,11. King David coveted his neighbour's wife, committed adultery with her, and murdered her husband; but still, it was to God that he said, 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned', Psalm 51.

Yes, there are 'good' people outwardly, and there are 'wicked' people as judged by their lifestyle; but, actually, as all have been conceived in sin then all are wicked, all are evil, all are corrupt, all sin against God, and all are lost.

Do you still want to judge others in the light of your own perceived goodness? All right, just answer this question then: What is the greatest sin of man – the worst fruit that his nature brings forth? Invariably the scriptural answer is: Pride. 'These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look' is first on the list, and 'God resisteth – lit. 'setteth himself against' – the proud.' 'The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. God is not in all his thoughts.' Do you not suffer from pride? What characteristic is more prevalent than 'the pride of life' in those who will work for their salvation? Just listen to them on the day of judgment: 'Have *we* not done...?' But how often do we hear news of people being arrested and charged with 'pride'? I don't even think pride is an offence under British law. But there it is at the head of the list of things God hates and abominates. Watch out for the day of judgment, O proud man!

I wonder how many of my readers – who said 'amen' to the opening paragraphs of this article – now find themselves highly offended by what has latterly been written: and all but the true children of God will be offended by it. Of course the irreligious will be offended; but so will the professed but actually unsaved 'Christian'. Why? Because works play a vital part in the plan of salvation, according to his understanding. Yes, the Pharisee will be offended – and that is what you are if you *are* offended – because he is a worker and therefore has no proper understanding of his sin; he just knows about sins; and because he has never committed such dreadful sins as, say, Jimmy Saville – and never

will! – then he thinks that that will be a contributing factor to his salvation.

But he is deluded; for salvation is ‘not of works’.

Salvation is not gained by being good; neither is it found by doing good deeds. Going to church or chapel won’t save you; neither will reading, studying, memorising, or even preaching the Bible. Praying won’t save you; neither will believing in God. Writing Christian articles never once saved a man; neither did exhorting, warning or encouraging another from scripture save.

Theological training, an elevated position in the church, denominational affiliation: none of these is saving. There is nothing saving in the singing of hymns, or psalms; in the using of the AV, or in Protestantism. Being described as a Calvinist: a Reformed, Conservative, Evangelical, brings as much salvation as being termed Charismatic, Liberal, and Arminian: which is none at all.

Is my religious reader still offended? Good. It’s not the true gospel if the natural man isn’t offended by it. You *must* be offended in your first-born state if you are ever to find salvation. Every shade of outward Christian profession must be exposed as being *no ground* on which to lay any hope for salvation. Every idea that one holds on to in their doing or being, which causes them to think that because of it they are – they must be! surely! – saved, must be rooted out and thrown down. No. Salvation is not of works; not of Christian profession – however sincere, or not; not of being anything in name or position. Every outward act, work or appearance must be abandoned as counting anything towards the salvation of your soul.

Now I said something earlier which will certainly have been offensive to many who think that ‘bad’ people cannot find salvation. And that was that if Jimmy Saville found repentance and mercy before God in his latter days – unbeknown to us – then he would indeed now be in heaven. But the offence is caused because they *do* think that salvation is of works; is only for those who have attained to some level of respectability:

who have never really fallen 'beyond the pale'. But they are ignorant of the true way of salvation: which is by the grace of God alone. And as grace is unmerited then workers don't need it, as they are just looking for reward.

Another godless man – the boxer Mohammed Ali – once said in an interview that he hoped that, in the end, all his good works would outweigh his bad so that, on balance, he should get to heaven. But this is what millions of professing Christians actually think in their heart of hearts when they judge themselves against the likes of Saville. Well, I've never been *that* bad! Luke 18:11. So, you've been 'good' have you? You've never sunk to such a reprobate level so as to make your good works void of their merit? Perhaps your giving your heart to Jesus – what a singular work! – has outweighed all your 'sins' and continued love of the world? Perhaps your sincere Christian profession has nullified – in effect – all that jealousy and lust which at times rages in your breast behind that O so sanguine religious smile? Perhaps your solemn deportment in chapel cancels out that self-righteousness, pride, and abominable Pharisaism which resides steadfastly in your breast, and which sometimes seeps out in your conversation, or reveals itself in a haughty look? Nevertheless, salvation is more or less assured?

Sorry. Salvation is not assured. For salvation is not of works. Listen again to all those 'committed Christians' on the day of judgment: 'Lord, Lord, have we not *done*...' There is their plea: there is the exposure of the state of their hearts all along: Works. Works, plain and simple. And as salvation is not of works, then the Lord of glory turns and calls them 'ye that work iniquity.' Workers, yes; but not workers of that which was good; but of that which was iniquitous. They prophesied – preached, witnessed, declared the gospel, in his name – in Jesus' name: but it was all iniquity. They had power over devils in their daily lives: Satan fled at the name of Jesus as they exercised 'faith' in his name: but it was all iniquitous presumption. And – were there ever a people like it for doing good! – they did *many* wonderful works. These were not your half-hearted, Sunday-only Christians; these were the totally committed: many *wonderful* works – didn't we *do works* – didn't *we do*? – in thy name? 'Yes, you did works', confirms the judge, 'but there's the problem,

you see; for salvation is not of works. Depart from me for ever.' Matt. 7:21-23.

But why? Why? Because performing works – even in Jesus' name – has at its root the mentality which says 'I will glory in his presence'; and as hinted at earlier, it exposes a seeking to establish a righteousness of their own instead of seeking only the righteousness of God. So working is also a case of out-and-out rebellion: rebellion against God and his truth – against the doctrine of the gospel of Christ. And all along they thought they were *believers* of the gospel! But workers don't believe! They work! Yet their work is not the work of faith, which, as we shall see, is constantly to believe and not work.

**'By grace...'**

So if salvation is not of works, then what is it of? Salvation is by grace: 'By *grace* are ye saved... not of works, lest any man should boast'; then boasting must be excluded. But grace is something you cannot work; if it was then it could not be saving. But thanks be unto God: Grace is Grace. And grace is of God – exclusively; and not of us. Works are of us; but works aren't saving; grace is.

Now, let the Arminian, let the legalist go and work grace if he can: for he must work. Go on. Grace, Grace, Grace: work it up: believe it down; claim it, quote it, write it into your confessions of faith; reference it from scripture, preach on it, expound it, weep over the pleasing thoughts it gives you; catechise your children on it: and see if that will issue in salvation. It will not. None of these works – although related to the word 'grace' – will save you.

The grace of God in Christ is something which emanates totally from outside ourselves; and as it is the grace of God then it emanates from eternity. Now, again, this is highly offensive to the natural man – to the worker. Firstly, salvation is not of works; secondly, it is of God, and now, it is of God from all eternity. So gradually, and by degrees, salvation is slipping away from our doing; it is retreating into the eternal counsels of God and finds its source in something which must be the ultimate offence to the worker – *predestination*.

Predestination: the eternal purpose of God, which he purposed in himself before the world began. Now the pride of man is raging. Now his believing that 'he shall be as God' in choosing whether or not he will be saved, is exposed as a great deception; for the truth of 'who is God indeed' is now revealed: and it is not man! But to the worker – to the one who thinks his eternal destiny lies in his own hands if he works well and does his best – the whole idea of God's predestinating those to whom his grace is to be shown is anathema; it cuts across the very reason for his existence – so he thinks. 'Then why am I working if God has already decided whom he is going to save; and if that salvation is by grace alone and not of reward?' Why indeed.

Yes, under grace, and by predestinating grace, all workers are overthrown; all works nullified; they don't mean a thing; in fact, they are vanity; more; they are vanity and lies. More. They are a hindrance to salvation. Even more. They are rebellion towards the truth of salvation in its very nature. How *can* a working man be saved! He cannot! In fact, his works compound his already condemnation because of his sin, for they are a looking to *another way of salvation to the one which God has designed*. Oh, torment of torments for all workers.

But why is it so important to relate grace to predestination and therefore to the sovereignty of God? Because workers in Christianity *are* happy to allow a definition of 'the grace of God' in their doctrine of salvation by works: after all, as Bible-believers they do love to quote, 'By grace are ye saved.' But their understanding of grace is that it is only the grace of God exercised in *providing* salvation in sending his Son to die; so that with their work of accepting the free gift of grace, based on their work of believing in Jesus, they can then say both, 'thank God for his grace', and, 'thank God that he gave me the opportunity to respond and believe in Jesus': after all, they reason, not everyone hears of Jesus, so not everyone gets the chance of being saved... 'Oh, what can we now do to get more people to hear, so that less will be lost?!' There it is: a professed belief in the grace of God with, still, works, works, works.

No, the grace of God has to arise from predestination, and that, from the absolute sovereignty of God, in order to do away with this idea that salvation is of 'grace' *and* of our beloved works. Be assured: salvation has been designed by God in such a way so as to ensure 'that *no flesh* should glory in his presence.'

So what is grace? The usual definition of grace is that it is the unmerited favour of God toward sinners. It is that, but it is more than that. Not only is the grace of God unmerited but it is naturally unsought by the sinner: 'I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me', Rom. 10:20. Grace, if it is to retain its absolute definition, must be totally and absolutely of God from first to last. It must be of God in the character of it, in the determining of it, in the purpose for it, in the bestowing of it, and in the objects of its reception.

Grace – by definition – cannot be teased from God as though we were meant to try and seduce it from him; God does not *promise* grace if we will exercise our minds and incline ourselves towards it; grace is not some sort of heavenly carrot dangled before our eyes, but just out of reach, which we can take to ourselves only if we expend the maximum amount of spiritual effort. Grace cannot be claimed by the sinner; God is not bound to bestow it because of any action or attribute of the sinner; God is in no way obliged to part with his grace at all: again, by definition.

Grace is absolutely unmerited; and it is naturally unsought by its eventual recipient; so is therefore totally within the prerogative of God to bestow, if he will. Look at Saul of Tarsus: the great 'pattern' of all that are to be saved by the grace of God, 1 Tim. 1:16. He received grace upon the road to Damascus; but please show me his praying for it; his desiring after it; his expectation of it if he did certain things. The opposite is true. The whole concept of 'grace' – in its character, need, or expectation – was not in all his thoughts: well, he *was* a worker after all! No; he was far too busy 'breathing out threatenings and slaughter' against the followers of the Lord Jesus: that impostor – as Saul would have thought Him – into his ancient and beloved religion: Jehovah's religion! (Remember, Saul didn't think himself to be under an 'old' covenant as such, for workers always expect to remain under the legal rule.)

And yet in the midst of all his raging – and he was after all the sole perpetrator of this first persecution of the early church, cp. Act 9:26-31 – we do see evidence that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ was already at work; for He said to the Pharisee, ‘It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks’, Acts 9:5. In his rage Saul was kicking against something he was beginning to perceive was true. He, along with others, had not long since been ‘cut to the heart’ by Stephen’s words, ‘Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it’, Acts 7:51-53.

What could cut a Pharisee’s heart more deeply than the suggestion that he had *the wrong circumcision*; that he had *not kept the law*; and that he had been complicit in the murder of the One of whom all his beloved prophets had spoken as he that should come! Saul was kicking against the pricks of conscience and of the shocking suggestion that *the whole of his religion* – though performed in the name and supposedly for the glory of Jehovah – *was wrong*, and that he was totally out of the way. Then what of his good works? What of his ‘blamelessness’ under the law? It all added up to ‘persecuting Christ’. For not only was Saul persecuting the Saviour in persecuting his people – the followers of ‘this way’ – but he was persecuting Christ in the doctrine of His gospel by his *working for salvation*.

This, then, is what ‘working for salvation’ is at its very heart: a denial of Christ and his doctrine; enmity against the gospel; a denial of the fulness and all-sufficiency of his work upon the cross; and a trampling under foot of the blood of the new covenant – the only way of salvation. Although the worker will say that he *does* look to the cross for his salvation, his working necessarily diminishes the effectiveness of Christ’s sacrifice and declares that additional work is required for a full and final deliverance: in other words, it *wasn’t* finished at the cross; the sinner

must work further to make Christ's salvation effectual: even if he only thinks that he must add his 'faith' to it.

But, no. Again, no. Salvation and the reception of grace is not of works; is not of the sinner; and Christ's work does not need adding to to complete it. So why keep trying?

### **'By grace, through faith'**

The verses I have been alluding to in this article are Ephesians 2:8,9; where Paul writes: 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.'

We have seen that salvation is not of works, but that it is by the grace of God alone. We have also hinted at the fact that 'faith' is not a work – it not being something we naturally possess or can 'do'. There are many who think that they have to exercise their own faith towards Jesus to be saved: as though God has provided the possibility of salvation in his Son, but that it is now up to us to 'believe in him' to receive this salvation so freely offered to all who might like to take it.

But here Paul tells us unequivocally that the faith required for the receiving of salvation is 'not of ourselves': 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and *that* – faith – [is] not of yourselves.' So if this faith is not of ourselves then who is it of? Well, as it is 'the gift of God' then it must reside in him. All things necessary for salvation reside in the Godhead. We have seen that the purposing of salvation is his; likewise the working of it; even the determining of who the recipients of it are to be is of him: *all* is of him, and is of him from all eternity. So also is the faith to be bestowed for the reception of salvation his to give: 'through faith... it is the gift of God'; and, obviously, he will give it to all who have been predestined to receive it: in fact, without this gift they *cannot* receive salvation at all.

Faith is given by God to all for whom Christ died, so that they can believe upon Christ's finished and full salvation when they have come to the end of trying to work for it themselves. Yes, and one of those works they've

latterly given up is the trying to believe. There are many who, having placed 'their' faith in Jesus, skip merrily into their new found Christian lives who have never been given the gift of faith at all. No, their work was good enough; after all, they believed, and it worked! For now they are saved, are full of rejoicing, assurance, peace and thanksgiving, and are – more or less – 'happy all the day'! But for all that, they are not found in Ephesians 2:8,9; because their faith is something they've done and can now boast in: as they sometimes sing: 'I have decided to follow Jesus... no turning back'; and if you ask them about their conversion they will be able to tell you exactly where and when they 'did it'. But Paul says that receiving the gift of true saving faith is not something you do, and it does not issue in boasting: 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.'

Oh, there is such a *yearning* in that 'lest' of the apostle. He knows that the validity of the Ephesians' whole profession depends upon the fact that they fully understand, and have experienced, a salvation which has not caused them to boast in any way whatsoever. Paul used the same word – 'boast', but translated 'glory' – in 1 Corinthians 1:29. In speaking of God's sovereign election of those who are called – and therefore saved – he concluded that it is thus, so 'that no flesh should glory in his presence.' But you will invariably find that those who do glory or boast in their exercising faith for salvation also deny – or in one way or another pervert – the truth of God's election. But let them glory now in their disobedience and rebellion against the word of God and the doctrine of Christ; and let them boast in and enjoy their 'salvation'; they will soon find that it pertains only to this life; for no flesh *shall* glory – in *his* presence.

But the modern churches are full of people who do glory, even though from time to time they like to talk about and hear 'good ministry' about 'grace'; and they glory simply because the 'gospel' which they hear from their preachers allows them to boast. So, both the gospel, the preachers, and the churches which permit this glorying are false. Then 'come out from among them, my people', saith the Lord – *commands* the Lord; 'Come out.' No ifs, no buts.

But let us consider this doctrine of 'faith' over-against 'works' for salvation. Works are performed under the law; while faith is exercised under the gospel. It might be helpful to point out here that in the scriptures the words 'faith' and 'believing' mean exactly the same thing; they are both the same word in the original. So Paul's words could just as easily have been translated, 'For by grace are ye saved through believing...' Likewise his 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ' of Acts 16:31 could have been rendered, 'Have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved'. So faith is believing; and believing is faith; which is why we read in one place that 'Abraham believed God', and in another, 'By faith Abraham...'

So let all workers acknowledge and fall under this great scriptural – gospel – truth: '*the law is not of faith*': the law does not command or require faith in any way whatsoever. If you are working for salvation then you are necessarily devoid of faith: for salvation is 'not of works', but 'through faith': faith and works being mutually exclusive. Works are of the law – the old covenant – while faith is of the gospel – the new covenant. But then, as we have just seen with Abraham, salvation never was of works even in Old Testament times: it was always of faith! Just read Hebrews chapter 11 – old covenant saints all! It is obvious that Abraham knew nothing of the law in his walk of faith, not least for the simple fact that the law wasn't given until over four hundred years after he had received free justification *by believing!* – not working! Galatians 3.

And consider the children of Israel. Before the law was given Moses led them out of Egypt and through the Red sea *by faith*: 'Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD!' And two years later, though the Law had now been given, still, the entering into the promised land would only have been achieved 'by faith': witness the combined testimonies of Caleb and Joshua in Numbers 13:30 and 14:6-9: theirs was the language of faith and believing in the LORD to deliver the land – with all its giants – into their hands. But when the people would not hearken to their words, the LORD said to Moses: 'How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be before they *believe* me...?' as Joshua and Caleb had

done, Num. 14:11. So as the people *refused to believe* the testimony of those who lived by faith, they were turned away to wander in the wilderness for a total of forty years: there eventually to die in their unbelief. Then when Moses – who typified ‘the law’, although he was a man of faith – had died because of one faithless act, Num. 20:7-12, it was Joshua the man of faith – a type of Christ – who by faith finally led the children of Israel into the promised land, see Deut. 34:9-Joshua 1:11, etc.

So we can see that the law wasn’t given to command faith, nor to bring about salvation: and if you walk by faith alone then you are not and cannot be under that law for salvation. No; the law was given because of sin: to show up, expose and bring to light the knowledge of sin; therefore to condemn the faithless in their unbelief, until Christ should appear with his salvation by grace. And you *still* think works are saving?! Oh, let all workers tremble.

### **‘The Faith of Jesus Christ’**

At this point it becomes important to write something of ‘the faith of Jesus Christ’, as it is central to the doctrine at hand: that salvation is by grace through faith alone, and not by the works of the law.

We have already seen that saving faith emanates from God – it is his possession to give to all his people. But not only is faith God’s gift, but the Lord Jesus has procured justifying righteousness – a main element of salvation – by faith. Paul has told us that our receiving salvation is only by the grace of God; that it is by a faith which resides in God alone; and that it is not of works on our behalf. Obviously the work of salvation is God’s to perform, as Jesus said to his Father: ‘I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do’, John 17:4, but that ‘work’ of the Saviour was not a work wrought under the law but was a work of faith. Indeed, we can declare this truth absolutely and forthrightly: that the Lord Jesus brought salvation in by faith alone and not by the works of the law – the ‘obedience’ of Rom. 5:19 being ‘the obedience of faith’: cp. Rom. 16:26. This is very important; not least because Paul says this very thing on more than one occasion; and therefore makes it a fundamental part of

the apostles' doctrine, the foundation upon which the true church is built, 1 Cor. 3:9-11.

Listen to what Paul wrote in Galatians 3:11: 'But that no man is justified by the law' – an absolute statement – 'in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith'. So the Lord Jesus – a just man – must have lived 'by faith' and not by the law. This has be the case, not least because his people who are to 'follow his steps' are not under the law for their walk: they too 'walk by faith'. And again: as 'no man is justified by the law' – absolutely – then the righteousness of God which Christ brought in by the shedding of his blood upon the cross can only have been 'by faith'; which is again what Paul wrote earlier in this epistle: 'Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law,' – by no man's works of the law, either by ours or by Christ's – it is again evident, for a man is justified 'by *the faith* of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: *for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified*', Gal. 2:16.

Indeed, how could we be justified – saved – by Christ's 'works of the law' if, first, salvation is not of works, and second, Christ walked by faith? We couldn't, and we aren't; because salvation is not of works; and Christ did bring salvation in by faith. Paul wrote this again in Romans 3:20-22: 'Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in [God's] sight: for by the law is the knowledge of – not salvation from – 'sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law' – totally outside the realm of the law – 'is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets' – remember, Jesus said that he came to *fulfil* – not 'keep' – the law and the prophets, Matt. 5:17,18 – 'even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe', not work.

So we see that the Lord Jesus lived by faith; in his dying upon the cross he fulfilled all the types and shadows of the law regarding sacrifice for sin by faith; he fulfilled all the prophetic writings regarding his coming, his suffering and his death, by faith; and in so doing brought in the

righteousness of God – that righteousness by which we are justified – solely by faith, and not by the law.

Jesus wasn't under the law as his rule of life – was he? If the law was 'not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane... etc.', 1 Tim. 1:9,10, then Christ must have lived and walked totally outside the realm of the law. If you doubt that, then just ask yourself why it was that, when Jesus spoke of the law to those who were under that law, he didn't associate himself with it or with them: in John 8:17 and 10:34, for instance, he used the words 'your law', not 'our law'; in Mark 10:3 he said, 'What did Moses command you', not 'us'; and in John 7:19 the Saviour again said 'you' instead of 'us' in relation to the giving of the law. If Jesus lived by the law then surely he wouldn't have been so detached from it in his speech.

But no. Jesus was 'the Author and Finisher of *faith*', Heb. 12:2; by him came 'grace and truth', as opposed to that which came by Moses: 'the law', John 1:17. After all, in direct contrast to the Jews who were 'Moses' disciples', the Saviour said of himself, 'I do always those things that please *the Father*', John 8:29; '*thy* law is within my heart', Ps. 40:7-10, and we know from the apostles' doctrine that 'without *faith* it is impossible to please him', Heb. 11:6. Jesus brought in justifying righteousness, again, 'thy righteousness', by his faith alone; and as that is the case – according to the doctrine of the gospel – then salvation is seen even more to be 'not of works'; just as Paul said: '*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*'

[I have written more fully on 'the faith of Jesus Christ' in the article 'Righteousness'.]

### **'His workmanship... His creation'**

The next thing that Paul writes in Ephesians 2 is this: 'For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them', verse 10. These words are often referred to by those who like to work as proof that we must do

*something*: 'because God has told us to do good works.' But this verse – even if taken on its own out of context – still speaks of the working of God, and of a mighty change in a person – a change which no worker ever experiences. And it is only after this change has taken place – when a person has received a knowledge of salvation – that 'good works' are mentioned. But then it is not even works which we do as such, but those 'which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them': something vastly different, as we shall see.

First of all this verse confirms what has already been said: salvation is not of works but of God: 'For we are his workmanship.' God saves: he works the salvation by his Son. God's people are those who have been 'wrought upon' by their Creator, cp. 2 Cor. 5:5, John 3:21: well, he *must* work our salvation if we cannot! And this is where his grace is seen again. We are lost. We try to work for salvation, but we cannot. We try to believe, but cannot. Then all is lost and we are without hope. But it is God who, in his grace, has taken hold of us; and is convicting us of our sin, and of our sins. We kick against the pricks which pierce our conscience, telling us that we are wrong, wrong, wrong. Eventually we are shown the Saviour who wrought the salvation of all his people upon the cross, and we look and plead that he might save us. This is an exercise in us which is wrought of God.

Then under the sound of the truth of the doctrine of the gospel of Christ we are given the gift of faith to see and believe that Christ did die for *me* upon the cross; that I am one of those for whom he prayed as he was being nailed to the tree: 'Father, forgive *them*, for they know not what they do.' All this is brought about by revelation and the witness of the Spirit; and with this gift of faith we begin to realise that we have been 'made anew' and are 'alive unto God'; that we've been 'born again': 'born of God', and that we have received a knowledge of the forgiveness of our sins! Thus we are manifest – poor helpless creatures of the dust! – to be 'his workmanship'. The heavenly Potter has taken a dead formless lump of clay, and has begun to form it into the likeness of his Son; and breathing the breath of spiritual life into its nostrils, it has become a new living soul.

So 'we are his workmanship' by the grace of God. That is the apostles' doctrine. Not that 'we are our own workmanship' by our decision to believe in Jesus; but we are his workmanship 'created in Christ Jesus'. There is no salvation outside of the Son; salvation is only to be found 'in' the Son. Therefore it is essential that for us to be in a saved state, we must be placed in the Son. And this is what Paul teaches here. We are 'created in Christ Jesus'. First of all we were created in Adam; but Adam fell into sin, and we in him. Therefore to be saved from sin we must be newly created 'in Christ Jesus' the last Adam – and there are to be no other Adams. And as we have seen that the old man cannot be saved and placed into Christ – whose body – the church – is not made up of 'sinners' – so a new man has to be formed – a saint – which can dwell 'in Christ Jesus'. And this too is a work of God. Well, we who are dead cannot work, cannot create, can we? No, this new man appears as 'his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus'.

I hope I never tire of saying it. The saved soul is one who was 'in sin', but is now by the new birth 'in Christ' as a settled state. And as far as God is concerned: what he actually *sees* in his Son, is a body of people who are now without sin, whose sins and iniquities he can no longer remember, as he has removed their transgressions from them 'as far as the east is from the west' – an infinite distance. You may not always 'feel' it, child of God, but when did the validity of God's workmanship ever stand in the fluctuating feelings of men? If you have been wrought upon by God; if you have been born again of the Spirit; if your only object of faith is Christ and his blood; and if you know that that faith is not natural to you, but is the received 'gift of God'; and if as a result you can only glory in his work in you, and never in your own; then you stand secure 'in Christ'; it is a state that you are in – that you have been placed in by his grace – and is a state out of which you will never be removed: indeed, it is God himself who keeps you in it by his grace; for you know by experience that it is not you who keeps yourself – least of all by works! Cp. 1 Peter 1:5.

Let us try and get this aspect of the doctrine of Christ clear and fixed in our minds. When we say that the saved soul is now a saint – i.e. a holy one – and that he is now 'without sin' and therefore no longer called a

‘sinner’; we are not saying that he is now a perfect man in the flesh: this is not perfectionism. No; the doctrine is declaring what we are ‘in Christ’, how we stand judicially in him. The children of God are counted by God – their Father – as being members of the body of Christ and therefore holy. And if you think about it how else could they be designated! Is Christ’s resurrected body defiled? When they pray and are heard of their Father they cannot be called ‘praying sinners’, for ‘we know that God heareth not sinners’, John 9:31; he only hears the prayer of the righteous, Prov. 15:29; and according to Peter in his doctrine ‘the righteous’ and ‘the sinner’ are not one and the same person, 1 Peter 4:18, because those two words describe opposite states that men reside in.

Remember, a sinner is someone who is ‘in sin’; while the righteous are those who are ‘in Christ’. The righteous are so because the righteousness of God has been imputed to them as a result of the shedding and sprinkling of Christ’s blood; this work of God transforms them from being classed as ‘sinner’ to being called ‘righteous’. So, again, ‘The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto *their* cry’, Psalm 34:15; compare also the distinction made between ‘the righteous’ and ‘the sinners’ in Psalm 1.

Therefore those who call upon the name of the Lord and are heard – though they feel themselves to be sinners – are actually already righteous in Christ. From the moment his blood was shed for them, in the estimation of the Judge of all the earth, they were called righteous. These only are called true believers; for how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? – only true believers call and are heard, Rom. 10:14. This is all such wonderful doctrine; and it is immensely liberating to those who feel their hearts drawn out to God in prayer, and who receive answers to their prayers; for these are the righteous; and regardless of how much they feel their sinnership in the flesh, they are not sinners in God’s sight, but are holy; they are in Christ and therefore are as he is.

This is why I said earlier that Jesus was not under the law as a rule of life when he was on earth; and is why his people are not under the law either: because he and they are ‘the righteous’: the law not being made

for the righteous, but for the sinner: to teach the latter of his need for Christ, 1 Tim. 1:9, Gal. 3:23-26: look out for those words 'no longer' in that second reference.

So they are 'created in Christ Jesus'. Of course in one sense – according to the eternal purpose of God in Christ – they have always been 'in Christ': 'Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me', Isa. 8:18; cp. also Eph. 1:4. But the actual working of their creation in Christ Jesus occurred in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. There they were, dead in trespasses and in sins: ready to be judged and put to death because of their sin. But Christ their substitute comes and takes their place in that judgment: he dies the just for the unjust; and so they die in him upon the cross. Then in him they are buried in the grave; the old man is dead and buried: gone for ever. Paul saw this, and so he said, 'I am crucified with Christ.'

But a new man must appear the other side of death: there must be a new creation in Christ Jesus. And as the old man cannot be raised to life, so a new man must appear: a new creation. And this is what happened when the Lord Jesus rose from the dead. As his death had been that of the old man, so his resurrection is that of the new man. His people are therefore seen to rise to newness of life in him. Again, this is not their old man rising; this is altogether a new creature. This is a new body, a new life, as far as they are concerned. And as this is a new man which lives beyond the grave, then it lives beyond the reach of the law and completely outside the realm of works. This new man dwells in grace and lives only by faith: thus it is said to be 'created in Christ Jesus'.

Oh, is there someone reading this who is struggling under the legal rule? Are you still 'Moses' disciple'? John 9:28. Do you still think that you must produce something good to please God: to cause him to look upon you with a degree of favour? Surely now you must realise that you are totally out of the way. Christ, and the work of Christ, is all that the Father requires and delights in: the work of the Godhead is all your salvation. To those who are struggling in this, the gospel message is simple: Salvation is not of works: *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. If you are being wrought upon by God in your

exercises – if you are his workmanship – then don't despair; he will bring you to faith under the sound of this gospel, for his name's sake, and for his glory alone.

### **'Unto good works'**

And so what is the fruit of this doctrine? Is it what the ignorant call 'antinomianism'? 'Now that we are righteous we can live as we please'? Not a bit of it. In fact, the opposite is true. The righteous – now possessing, amongst other things, 'the mind of Christ' – are hardly going to have the frame of mind which says, 'Let us continue in sin so that grace may abound', because they know that to 'continue in sin' means to be in the state of sinnership. But now being in the complete opposite state – 'in Christ' – they are no longer in sin, no longer 'serve sin', and therefore cannot continue in it. This is why Paul answered 'God forbid' to the question, see Romans 6:1 in context. God's people cannot continue in sin for His seed remaineth in them: and they cannot sin, because they are born of God! 1 John 3:9. Yes, while they remain in this body of death, they will still commit sins and fall into temptation; but this is not 'continuing in sin'.

So let us see why 'loose living' is not the fruit of being 'in Christ'. Paul writes that we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus 'unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them'. Far from being in Christ leading to lawlessness, it leads to 'good works': 'unto good works', meaning that works *follow* salvation not precede it. Now is this where the worker can at last gain some encouragement? No, not at all. So what are these good works?

These works, like our salvation and our faith, are of God! They are works which he has before ordained that we should walk in them. (Tyndale, interestingly, has the emphasis of what was 'before ordained' resting on us rather than the works: '...created in Christ Jesus unto good works, unto the which God ordained us before, that we should walk in them': stripping any last semblance of pride that might still be lurking in 'the worker'!) This is not us being sent running along a Christian pathway from salvation to do and to be the best we can 'for Jesus'; as though he is now looking down from heaven upon a newly released child to see what

he will now do with his liberty. The Lord is never detached from the lives of his children; how can he be! they are 'in him'! As I said, God doesn't 'set us running' and just sit back and be pleased with any good that we might like to think we do – especially 'in his name'. No. As we are his workmanship through and through, then it is he 'that worketh in us both to will, and to do of his good pleasure' those things which he has before ordained that we should walk in them. And how can we not walk in the good works which God is working in us? Will not his 'good pleasure' be fulfilled? Does anything which he has before ordained not come to pass? So it is not up to *us* to *do* good works, but that good works will be done in us – we will 'walk in them' – as a result of God's willing and doing; which will be for his glory alone, and will, again, remove any thought of boasting in ourselves.

This is also what 'the fruit of the Spirit' is. So often the 'fruits' – as they are usually referred to – in Galatians 5:22,23 are taken as a list of characteristics that we must strive to produce so that we can show people what good Christians we are becoming; but this is wrong. First of all, they are not fruits, but 'fruit' – singular: the whole is the fruit. Those who love to work invariably pick out of the list those things which they think they are [naturally] most suited to perform, and when they see the fulfilment – or practising – of them in their lives then they think that the fruits of the Spirit are being seen in them. But this is error – of course it's error if it's works – because, secondly, Paul says that this fruit is the fruit 'of the Spirit', and not our fruit – the fruit of our work and effort – although the fruit is seen in us. No; it is the fruit of the work of the Spirit who, being God, works in us both the will and the doing of his good pleasure.

And this is what Jesus taught in John 15. There the branches which abide in the vine *will* bring forth good fruit: it is impossible that they won't because the life, the sap, the nourishment which flows in and through them is that which emanates from the root of the vine and not from the branches. So as they abide in the vine they cannot help but bring forth fruit. Likewise as it is God who is working in us these good works which he has before ordained that we should walk in them, then the good works will doubtless appear: but not by our doing, but by his!

The fruit is seen to be on the branches only because the branches abide in the vine. No one seriously believes – even in nature – that a branch can of itself bring forth fruit, though the fruit appears on the branch. So likewise, though fruit is seen in the lives of the children of God – and very often they don't see the fruit themselves, cp. Matt. 25:34-40 – it has not appeared of themselves, but only from their abiding in Christ and by being indwelt of the Spirit. So the fruit is His fruit in them, and it is without works on their part – though it be called 'good works'. So the poor workers are deflated and defeated again.

Now we can reiterate this by understanding the word 'walk' here: '...before ordained that we should *walk* in them.' This is different than just 'doing' things; this is walking. To walk is to remain in a state and to continue in a way: it indicates a constant, rather than a series of one-off doings. Similar words used to describe the same state in scripture are, as we have just seen, 'abiding', along with 'remaining', 'continuing', 'dwelling'. To abide in Christ is to walk in him; and as they 'walk in the Spirit', the called are continual 'followers' of the Lord Jesus 'whithersoever he goeth'.

Similarly, to 'keep' his commandments – the commandments of the Lord Jesus, not the Law of Moses – is not to set them objectively before our eyes for the purpose of trying to do them to the best of our ability – which is the mentality and, therefore, the constant miserable failing experience of the legalist, who even tries to turn the exhortations of the gospel into a legal rule – but like Mary, cp. Luke 2:19,51, it is to hide Christ's commandments in our hearts, where they are pondered over, meditated upon, and indeed, fed upon, so that they infuse into our very being, moulding our (new) minds to think in accordance with them, therefore causing us – necessarily – to walk in them.

This is what Solomon meant when he said of his father: 'He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live', Prov. 4:4. If we remember that the word 'keep' can also be used to describe a prison – a place which holds something fast – then we will come to realise that 'keeping' is something

much more profound than just 'doing'; in fact the word 'retain' in the above verse also means 'to hold up', as in a hold.

Those who are saved walk in 'a new and living way'; and it is on this way alone that they are said to keep Christ's words and commandments, and therefore 'walk in good works'. This is all the fruit of being 'in Christ'. Whereas before we 'walked' in sin; in darkness; in rebellion and enmity; now we walk utterly differently: in 'good works.' So once again, *no flesh* will glory in his presence; cp. John 14:20-24, 1 John 2:3-6.

### **The Good Works**

So what are these good works which the children of God walk in, but do not produce of themselves? Well, they can best be described as 'the work of faith – believing, the labour of love, and the patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ', which, in principle, are the only valid good works in the sight of God and our Father, 1 Thes. 1:3, cp. also Heb. 11:6.

What is the work of faith? Well, we have already seen something of Christ's work of faith in his incarnation and sacrifice upon the cross to procure our salvation. The work of faith is simply 'believing God' when he speaks, and obeying; falling under the hearing of what he says; as it was said by the Lord Jesus himself: 'My sheep hear my voice... and they *follow me*'. And that is a statement of fact by the Saviour, not a wish that they would. The obedience of faith – the work of faith – is to follow Christ in all the ways he commands and leads; is to be led of the Spirit in the way of faith; which will ultimately result in 'doing the will of the Father', Matt. 7:21. It is not just entering through the strait gate of conversion, but is thereafter a *walking* on the narrow way also. It is to believe the Lord when he speaks and to obey his voice regardless of the cost to self. And the same is to be called 'the children of Abraham' who is 'the father of all them that believe', Gal. 3, Rom. 4.

The work of faith is not us reading the Bible and picking out the bits that we feel we'd like to obey, and then bringing those works – that obedience – to God saying, 'Look what I've done!' And there are many who do this: who turn the work of God – so they think – into just one long round of religious employments; but God is not working in them at all – they are

working. So the work of faith is an elusive work today; but God is still bringing it to pass in his people, and will continue to do so despite the many counterfeits.

Likewise the labour of love. Here again is a 'good work'; yea, a *labour*, no less. Now let the self-congratulatory workers embark on this type of labouring and see how far they get. For this is a labour, and it is a labour which is begotten only by the love of God residing in the heart. God's love is poured out – 'shed abroad', Rom. 5:5 – into the heart of a saved soul, and it is this love which generates this labour. So this is not our natural love supposedly sanctified – a love which is only selfish: we only love at best *because*, or *if* – as it hasn't been our faith. No, this is God's love exercised in the heart and life: and what an altogether different love that is to ours!

From this love springs willing obedience to the Lord Jesus and to the whole of his doctrine; it embraces the way of the cross and self-sacrifice for Christ's sake and the gospel's – and what a labour it is to be brought to walk in *that* way! for it is a way abominable to the flesh; but brought to it we must be if we would be his disciples, Luke 14:27. This love causes us to love – give ourselves for – the brethren: those others in whom this work of salvation has been wrought; and it causes us to bear the reproaches, persecutions and hatred of those in whom this work is not being wrought – though they may profess to be 'the Lord's'. This labour of love enables us to continue along the narrow way which leadeth unto life even though it is often a solitary and lonely way. But it is a labour of love ultimately for Christ's glory: 'that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.'

And 'the patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ' is manifest in all our 'much tribulation' as a continual looking for his coming; it is a keeping our eyes upon the end of all things; a 'loving his appearing'. We watch and pray. We wait for the promise of his coming again at the end of the world finally to defeat all our enemies; the last of which is death; and it is a keeping in mind that though our enemies trouble us, and that we would at times be avenged upon them, yet, we are encouraged to

remember that ‘vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the LORD’, see Rom. 12:18-21.

So, by grace, we wait patiently – in faith and love day by weary day – to be transformed finally into his likeness; to put on immortality; to dwell in the presence of our God and Saviour on the new earth, wherein dwelleth only righteousness: where there will be no more curse, no more sin, no more tears, no more trouble with and in the flesh; and *no more waiting!* Christ is our all; and we wait patiently for him.

But unlike the saint the worker has little trouble with being in the flesh, or with being in this present evil world – religious or secular. They don’t really want it to end – except so that they can be told by their Jesus how good they’ve been. But not so the true children of God – his workmanship: his good and faithful servants. They want to be gone. They are vexed in their righteous souls by everything here; and it causes them to sigh, ‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus.’

These are the good works which God hath before ordained for us to walk in; and we will walk in them; and, brothers and sisters in Christ, despite all the temptations to the contrary, we *do* walk in them, don’t we? (I wish I knew where some of you were so that, as we see the day approaching, we could comfort one another with these things...)

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For a more detailed consideration of what it means to ‘abide in Christ’ please see ‘Numbering Our Days’, Part 2.