

It Is No Longer I Who Live, but Christ

By Ginny Larsen

“For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.”

(Galatians 2:19-21)

“Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”

(1 Corinthians 3:12-15)

Our works – what are they? What do we see as works acceptable to God? What works are in vain? What works were *“prepared beforehand for us to do?”* (Eph. 2:10) We can heartily “serve the Lord” full of zeal, yet it is all works of flesh that count for nothing and perhaps are even harmful to truly reaching people for Christ. Many organizations have been started in the name of Jesus that are nothing more than men’s organizations and contrary to God’s true Word. None of us as Christians who love the Lord want that! None of us wants to be an offense to the Gospel, even while we think we are sharing the Gospel. Yet it happens. While well-meaning, we can even drive someone further away from Christ. We can misrepresent Him as Peter did in the Garden of Gethsemane, acting of his own accord when he struck a soldier with the sword, cutting off his ear. He thought he was defending his Lord and serving Him. We can be used by the devil, thinking we are speaking for God, as Peter did when he rebuked Jesus for saying He must die. Shortly beforehand, the Lord commended Him by saying the Father had revealed truth to him, when He proclaimed Jesus was the Son of God. Now Jesus said, “Get behind me satan!” and stated that Peter did not have in mind the things of God but the things of man.

Until we learn the meaning of what it is to be “in Christ” and “Christ in me,” we also will not learn the works that are acceptable to God in our daily lives. In fact what we perceive as works are not always the “works” He is looking for. What we miss and don’t necessarily call “works” is *His* working in and through us in our normal daily lives, sometimes without us being aware. How we respond to someone, how we reach out to someone, or how we go about our chores in what frame of mind, faith, acceptance, disposition – these all are works that we don’t think of as important or even as “works.” Until He has worked in us the nature of Christ in the little things, how can we truly please Him in the big things? If we grumble over the small tasks and the irritations of a normal day, forgetting to “put on Christ,” how can we in Christ walk out as His representatives – as true witnesses to those around us? If we are not loving our families and the body of Christ, how can we represent Christ? We can zealously serve others all the while neglecting our relationships. All the works we do then are wood, hay, and stubble, and it is all lost.

To be in Christ is the theme of all of the apostle Paul’s teaching. All begins there. We were crucified with Christ – dead to law, to sin, to ourselves and our self-pursuits, to this world, and to the devil’s reach. We were risen with Christ to Heavenly places where He is, where our true life

is hidden. It is past tense. It is not something future, it is now as we were placed “in Christ.” If we don’t walk and work in faith in this life, in the reality of it, and the power of it, and the life of Christ Himself in us, our works are dead works. They are only the flesh trying to please God. Religious flesh cannot please God anymore than non-religious flesh.

Only the works of Christ are acceptable to God. Only HIS works are “good” works. Only HIS righteousness is acceptable to God. So only as it is His life working in us and through us to do His good will, can we be pleasing to God. Only what is of faith can be pleasing to Him. Our faith in Him through difficulties, learning to stand dressed in His full armor, learning to overcome by believing and embracing His promises, these are works empowered by the Holy Spirit in us. When these are happening in us as a result of our abiding in Him, then true outward works are the natural fruit that will please Him and glorify Him to others. Only He glorifies Himself, we cannot glorify Him with OUR works, but His through us.

Every day we are to be a “living sacrifice unto Him” – *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect”* (Romans 12:1-2).

We present ourselves to God in faith, knowing He alone is the power in us, as we go about our day, that we would see ourselves as His vessel, that He is able to work through every part of our daily life, not just when we are doing some “Christian service.” As I clean my house, I present myself to Him, to do it for His glory. As I have conversations with those I encounter, I present myself to Him, that He can use me as He will in those conversations, keeping me from saying anything that would not glorify Him or benefit another. As I have free time, I present myself to Him, and make myself available to what He wants me to do with it. I present my mind, my eyes, my ears, my all to what is pleasing to Him. Our *good* works are everything that flows from us in thought, word, and deed, unto Christ out of our faith in Him. Only as it is “Christ Who lives in me, and the life I now live I live by faith in Him” can I be pleasing to Him.

We cannot work to sanctify ourselves. By faith, rather, we work out in our daily lives that which He has worked in us. “Sanctification is the imparting to us of *God Himself* by the Holy Spirit in the soul” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary on 1 Peter 1:4). Our sanctification is His life in us, and through us, and our working it out even as He works in us to “will and to do” by faith. *“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure”* (Philippians 2:12-13).

We cannot work to *keep* ourselves, it is His power that keeps us through faith in His finished work alone, which is given by the presence of His Spirit in us through regeneration. It is not a faith in *our* faith to keep us, but in His work in us and His power – a rest in the eternal life He has given to us and the power of His life in us. We walk in that faith in which His works flow, and respond to the Spirit He has given us as He works in us. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”* (1 Peter 1:3-5).

We cannot work to justify ourselves before God. Nor can we be perfected by our works. *“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was*

*publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, **are you now being perfected by the flesh?**” (Galatians 3:1-3)*

It is Christ alone and His work, embraced through faith (a complete reliance in Him, all He is, and all He has done) that we are saved, that we are kept, that we are perfected. His works were completed and accepted in Heaven. We have been raised up with Him, in Him, and His work of righteousness becomes imputed to us, as we embrace and rely on all He is and has done, abiding in Him. Only the fruit of His Spirit in us then is acceptable in Heaven. Abiding in Him is what enables us to bear fruit unto Him. *“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples”* (John 15:4-8).

Father, enable us to see and grasp the life of Christ in us, the reality of our being “seated in Heavenly places with Christ” and abide in You daily, that our works will not be burned up but well pleasing to You, on that day when we stand before You, and You are glorified in us! In Jesus’ name may it be so. Amen.