

The Science of Cultivating Faith

No. 17

"In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." Gal. 5:6.

With those who were in mind when this scripture was originally written, circumcision was everything; and it was everything simply because of what it represented.

And what circumcision represented to those people was works, and works only. It was the greatest of all works,—greater than creation itself,—because, as the rabbis put it, "So great is circumcision, that but for it the Holy One, blessed be he, would not have created the world." "It is as great as all the other commandments;" "equivalent to all the commandments of the law."—*Farrar's "Life of Paul," chap. 22, par. 5, note; chap. 35, para 4, note.*

Yet this which to them was so great, the Lord sweeps away, as with a blast, in the words, "Circumcision is nothing;" and in Christ Jesus, circumcision avails nothing. And, in view of what circumcision meant to them, this was simply to say that works are nothing, and in Christ Jesus works avail nothing.

Then to all the others, who, in view of this, might be inclined to boast in their lack of works, and thus excuse sin, the word is given with equal force: "And uncircumcision is nothing." "In Jesus Christ neither . . . *uncircumcision* availeth anything:" which, in its connection, was simply to say that the absence of works is nothing; and in Christ Jesus the absence of works avails nothing.

So, then, works are nothing, and the absence of works is nothing. In Christ Jesus neither works nor the lack of works avails anything.

This word of the Lord, therefore, utterly and forever excludes both classes from all merit, and from all ground of merit, in themselves, or in anything they ever did or did not do.

And this is all as true to-day as ever. To-day, whether persons are out of Christ or in Christ, neither works nor no works avail anything. For it is written: "Are you in Christ? Not if you do not acknowledge yourselves erring, helpless, condemned sinners, . . . Your birth, your reputation, your wealth, your talents, your virtues, your piety, your philanthropy, or anything else in you or connected with you, will not form a bond of union between your soul and Christ."—"*Testimony for the Church," No. 31, pages 44, 45.*

What then? Is everybody left in utter emptiness?—No, no! Thank the Lord there is *something* which avails for all, and avails forever. Though it be the everlasting truth that "in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision," neither works nor no works avail anything; yet it is also the eternal truth that "in Jesus Christ . . . FAITH WHICH WORKETH," does avail.

Notice that it is not faith *and* works that avail: it is "faith WHICH worketh." It is faith which *itself* is able to work and does work,—it is this, and this alone, that avails for anybody, anywhere, at any time.

Faith is only of God; and, working, it works only the works of God. Thus he who, in Christ Jesus, has the "faith *which* worketh," has that which avails to show God manifest in the flesh, working the works of God. And thus "this is the *work of God*, that *ye believe* on him whom he hath sent."

And so, while you are in Christ, "if there is any good in you, it is wholly attributable to the mercy of the compassionate Saviour. . . . Your connection with the church, the manner in which your brethren regard you, will be of no avail, unless you believe in Christ. It is not enough to believe *about* him; you must believe *in* him. You must rely wholly upon his saving grace."—*Id.*, pages 44, 45.

"Hast thou faith?" Have the faith of God. "Here are they that keep . . . the faith of Jesus."

A. T. Jones.

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