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*"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"*

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*Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD*

# THE PLACE OF GOOD WORKS

as seen in the Pastoral Epistles

By EUGENE STOCK

There has been a great deal of needless controversy at times about the place of "good works" in the Christian system. James's "justification by works" has been set up as correcting Paul's "justification by faith"; whereas there is good reason for thinking that James wrote first, and anyway, what he opposed was not Paul's "faith" but the barren orthodoxy of the Pharisaism that had infected some of the Jewish Christians to whom he wrote. He would have been as much opposed as Paul to the teaching of Pope's famous couplet—

For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;  
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

But the fact is that nowhere in the N.T. are "good works" more strongly insisted on than in Paul's Epistles, and particularly in the Pastorals. Not that they have any share in procuring "salvation." Very emphatic is the declaration in Titus 3:5, "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us." He fully acknowledges that the Christian does "do works in righteousness". The R.V. rendering makes this clear. But however good such works may be, they are imperfect and inadequate. They "fall short" as Rom. 3:23 so picturesquely puts it. As the *Expositor's Gk. Test* so felicitously puts it, they are "not current coin in the kingdom of God."

Not the labour of my hands  
Can fulfil Thy law's demands

Let us now look at the verses in which "good works" are mentioned in these three Epistles. Both Greek words for "good", *agathos* and *kalos*, are used. The former means intrinsically good; the latter means fair, beautiful, honourable, noble, attractively good. *Agathos* occurs in the following references: 1st Eph. 2:9, 10; 5:10; 2 Eph. 2:21; 3:17; Titus 1:16; 3:1. *Kalos* in 1 Eph. 3:1; 5:10, 25; 6:18; Titus 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14. (Look these up before you go further.)

I confess I fail to see any clear distinction between the two words in these verses. The very first occurrence of *agathos* would seem rather to require *kalos*. It will be noticed that in the first list, in every instance but one, it is the singular, "work", while in the second, in every case but one, it is the plural "works", but

this must be purely accidental, as the general N.T. usage in no way suggests any such difference. The two passages which are especially important as shewing Paul's ethical teaching are the very two which are also the most important doctrinally; both of them in Titus, chs. 2:11-14 and 3:4-8. Let us look at these.

(1) "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of *good works*." Here is the purpose of the Son of God in giving Himself for us. Not merely to save us from the guilt and penalty of sin. We are redeemed to be "a people for His own possession", or, as the A.V. has it, "a peculiar people". This idea is first revealed in Exodus and Deuteronomy in reference to Israel, but owing to their failure a new choice had to be made. It is a wonderful phrase. The same Greek words, *laos periousios*, are found in the Septuagint of Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18. Our word "peculiar" was taken by Tindale from the Latin *peculium*, a man's own special possession.

But what kind of people does God want as His *peculium*? orthodox people? evangelical people? It does not say so. The words are "zealous of good works." For *that* we are redeemed; for *that* we are purified. Could there be a stronger motive for being "rich in good works" (1 Tim. 6:18), "ready unto every good work" (Tit. 3:1)?

But our passage has other words in it equally significant. "The grace of God hath appeared"—to do two things: (a) "bringing salvation"; (b) "instructing us, to the intent that. . ." The verb "instruct" is *paideuo*, which means primarily training a child (*pais*, *paidion*), and includes discipline and correction. "Chastening", in Heb. 12, is the same or a similar word. So in these Epistles are "taught" (1 Tim. 1:20), "correcting" (2 Tim. 2:25), "instruction" (2 Tim. 3:16). "The grace of God came", *putting us to school*: And this with an object—"to the intent that. . ." It is not, as in the A.V., "teaching us that. . ."; it is not merely giving us a lesson; it is educating, training, *schooling* us with an end in view—so the Gk. prep. *hina* implies. And what is the end in view? That "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world."

In this sentence we have the negative and positive. "Ungodliness" and "godly" are *contrasted*. "Worldly lusts"—what John (1st Eph. 2:16) calls "all that is in the world, the lust of the

flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life", are contrasted with "soberly" and "righteously", i.e., our duty to ourselves and to others. They are to be "denied"; to be met by a never-failing and persistent NO!

This contrast of negative and positive suggests another lesson: A man who was tempted to a certain sin overcame the temptation, and reporting this to a friend said, "Is not this holiness?" "No", was the reply: "It is victory." "And is not victory over sin holiness?" "No; victory implies struggle; holiness takes away the 'want to'!" So in this verse: "denying worldly lusts" is victory; living "soberly, righteously, godly", is holiness.

(2) The other passage, in Titus 3:8, follows the most comprehensive doctrinal statement in these Epistles. After making that statement Paul exclaims "Faithful is the saying!" and then goes on to exhort Titus to "affirm confidently" the truths just stated. But with what object? "To the end that"—the same strong Greek preposition *hina* as we had before—"they which have believed God may be careful to maintain *good works*." Incidentally, we may truly gather that the way to promote good works in is to be "confidently affirming" those doctrines, the glorious doctrines of grace; but the direct lesson is that the doctrines themselves fail in their influence if they do not *produce good works*.

Then, so strongly does Paul feel the importance of this, that at the very end of the Letter, after the personal directions, he returns to it, and gives Titus another reminder, for fear he should forget it. Verse 14, "And let all our people also learn to maintain *good works* for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful." And this is no mere general language. "For necessary uses"—what does that mean? One notable commentary suggests "such as the wants of the missionaries". Is this a vague guess? Look at the preceding verse: "Set forward Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them." Whether Zenas was a missionary we know not; but Apollos certainly was. Titus was to make arrangements for their journey, to provide them with whatever was "wanted"; but he need not be solely responsible: "Let our people *also* learn" to supply the wants of God's messengers. Thus the great doctrines are to bear fruit in the smallest practical acts and services; and such would be "*good works*" in the sense of what is graceful and attractive—for here the word is significantly *kalos*. An excellent missionary text!