

**THE**  
**A M E R I C A N**  
**NATIONAL PREACHER.**

**A**  
**REPOSITORY OF ORIGINAL SERMONS,**

**FROM**  
**LIVING MINISTERS OF THE UNITED STATES.**

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**EDITED BY REV. F. C. WOODWORTH.**

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• Corresponding with previous volumes.

THE  
NATIONAL PREACHER.

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I.

GOD'S MORAL SYSTEM, SUPERIOR TO THE MATERIAL.

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BY REV. R. S. STORRS, JR.,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE PILGRIMS, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

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“And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fall.”—LUKE xvi. 17.

THE conception of the Material System is naturally accompanied in the mind by the impression of its permanence. Even the child perceives the solidity and hardness of the objects that surround him; and their power at once so absolutely to uphold and to restrict him, may well seem the evidence of their necessary duration. And as he comes to understand more fully the extent, and structure, and the history of the system, this first impression is naturally confirmed. As he learns how vast the Earth is,—not bounded by the horizon as he supposed, but bearing upon its mighty bosom islands, and realms, and empires, and continents even, with fathomless oceans poured round them as their drapery; as he examines the physical structure of the earth, and drives his drill into the granite bars that lock and interlock beneath its surface, or traces the ridges of rock and iron that stretch across it as its ribs of strength; as he follows backward the many generations that in succession have lived and labored upon its globe, and feels how changeless it has been through all their changes,—how absolutely it is now the same as when the Roman eagles traversed its surface, as when the temple of the Sun was standing in Palmyra, as when the hundred-gated Thebes stretched its stupendous front along the Nile; nay, as passing backward from even this computation he learns through what vast cycles and periods, and into what remote, impenetrable abysses, the researches of the naturalist seem to carry its duration:—and most of all, as rising from this view of the Earth, he learns to comprehend in some degree the magnitude of the System in which it is but part,

## X.

## OUR OWN SALVATION—THE WORK AND THE ENCOURAGEMENT.

BY REV. M. W. JACOBUS,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BROOKLYN, (PRESBYTERY OF N. Y.)

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”—PHIL. II. 12, 13.

A MAN who has undertaken to be saved, has entered upon the greatest possible work—a work which, as it looks for its consummation at the end of life, so is to engage all the energies of his lifetime. There never was a more grievous deception of Satan, than that which satisfies the convert with his initial experiences, and settles him down upon them as the substance of salvation. All the crude ideas of *getting religion* by a few given exercises, and a certain short process of excitements and reliefs, so that soon it shall be all done and over, have come of that arch-deceiver, who ruins as completely by false hopes, as by infidelity. This urgency of the Apostle is therefore of most momentous import. The Christian course is called a race. And he exhorts the man who has entered the lists, to run on. The crown is not at this end, nor anywhere along the course; but at the other end—at the goal. Here is a WORK, only undertaken now, and only begun. All the undertaking and the beginning infer a vigorous and continuous prosecution. It is a thing to be elaborated, carried out, completed. And because it is a man's own salvation, it is very plain that it must be a work demanding high personal endeavors, which are never to be remitted unto the end.

Our own salvation, therefore, he sets before us, as a plan to be executed—as a design to be fulfilled—as an edifice to be carried up to the top-stone. And as this salvation is not really accomplished, on our part, until life ceases, so the working out of this majestic plan is the grand business of one's lifetime; and the laborious workman puts the last stroke of the hammer to the building, with his last and dying breath.

But here it is to be understood, that this prosecution of the work also supposes the work really commenced. The language is susceptible of misapplication. The address is here, in the text, not to

the unconverted, but to those who have really undertaken—in whom, and by whom, a beginning has been made. It is not intended to set any man upon his own resources, until he is first fully cast upon the resources of God in Christ. None but such would understand the mental philosophy of the text. It is not meant to deceive any with the idea that they can undertake and work out their own salvation, all independently of the Almighty, and with no thanks to divine grace. We enter into no discussion here about the divine efficiency as consistent with the free agency. We take the *fact*, as it must be admitted, and as it is expressed in the text, that in this saving matter, man works *out*, and God works *in*. We are not compelled to describe the processes, any more than to explain the co-operation of soul and body in every action. We know from the fact itself, that such co-working is consistent. Every Christian finds it so in his experience, whatever his theory may be; and the man is only urged to his own proper part in the matter. We need not show how, in the highest sense, Christ has wrought out the salvation of every true believer, by his redeeming work; or how the plan employs the man's own energies, only renewing his will. The whole truth of the subject is implied in the text, and the positions are perfectly consistent.

*First, then, it is here put among the leading encouragements to a Christian, that it is God who already worketh in him.* That a good and gracious work is already begun in the believing heart by the Author of our salvation. "If there be any consolation in Christ," he says, go forward. If you have any comfort in his love, get more. If you have any fellowship of the spirit, any bowels and mercies, aim at an increase, and fulfilment. The way is most clearly opened to you. For this experience, however incipient, is to be recognized as a proof of that divine working, which gives the highest encouragements for the prosecution. You are to take these beginnings of a new life, and instead of being disheartened at the mere infancy of it, consider its high and heavenly origin, and be animated in the prospect of its development. If there be in you any genuine feature of the new birth, does it not argue that you are laid hold of by infinite grace, for your salvation? And you are "to follow after, if that you may apprehend that for which also you are apprehended of Christ Jesus." Seize these cheering proofs that "God hath not appointed you to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." They are the encouraging hints to you of an eternal purpose, working already in you this incipient willing and doing. Every changed disposition, and every regenerate action, are God's gracious intimations to you, urging you on in the way of your complete and eternal redemption. You are not left to grope in the dark, awed and disheartened by impenetrable mysteries; for just so far as God's secret plan may be useful to be known in the attainment of salvation, so far it is opened to the true believer. The work is a present salvation from sin, as connected

with a future salvation from death. The name *Jesus* has this interpretation to every believer, "He shall save his people from their sins." The work is personal, therefore. It is present and practical. It is such, that if it is going on, you can see its progress in the progressive results. It is such as to engage your interest and energy at every step. To be saved from the sins which have debased you, and from the sins which still beset you, is to be your daily aim and ambition, as the essence of the great work; and never are you to be content a moment, except as you see this salvation going vigorously forward to the end. And so Christ does early whisper to the true disciple, "I have chosen you and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit." "Fear not, little flock," he is yet saying to his believing people; "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." And by unmistakable marks and tokens, he is already showing the timid heir of heaven all the promises, and seals, and covenants, and often, as it seems, his very name written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Are not these the strongest incentives held out, from that world of glory, to labor on—to climb up the hill—to *work out* the salvation? This is the crown laid up for the Apostle, of which he knows beforehand. This is the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, which he declares himself to have been striving for as his one aim of life, and with all his energies.

We have now prepared the way to consider this practical subject from the proper point, and with its legitimate application—to show *how one's salvation is to be worked out*—and to *urge these high incentives*.

1. This charge of the Apostle *is aimed against the natural perils of the case*. It would be readily enough comprehended, in reference to any other undertaking. We all know what it is to work out a calculation to its results—what it is to work out a difficult plan to its execution—what it is to work out a personal deliverance by energetic labors—what it is to work out any enterprise to which zeal and vigor of mind and body can be applied. It is to employ our highest endeavors to compass the results, whether they be near or distant, whether they occupy us an hour or a lifetime. One of the English masters, when asked how long he had been at a certain picture, answered, "*All my life*." Has a man undertaken to be saved? Then this is only the greatest possible undertaking. Has he looked into the revealed plan, and consulted the divine party, and so entered upon the work? Then, here is simply an exhortation to that man to *work on*, under the most gracious auspices, with the strongest assurances of success, yet with fear and trembling at the parties concerned, and at the magnitude of interests involved. It is an exhortation pressed home, in view of a natural tendency to run a brief season, and *tire*, or *turn aside*—to work, and *weary* of it—to fall under the power of Satan, in temptations that seem the more severe and artful, because of the effort to elude his snare.

How, in four cases out of five, the sower finds his instrumental work a wretched abortion! The way-side ones—the stony ground ones—the thorny field ones—and then, at last, even the wheat, with the tares sown at night among it! Some seed snatched away at the very outset; some springing promptly, but, alas! no soil and no root; some growing up, but, oh! the thorns growing up faster, and by such a rank and ruinous overgrowth, choking all that was hopeful at first; and then, after a thousand other escapes, the remainder liable to be overrun with tares, maliciously sown by the adversary. How the Apostle seems to chill at the thought, when he hears God saying, “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him!” How he adds, “We are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” How he gathers a volume of warnings into one brief sentence, and exclaims, in the ear of every heavenward traveller, “Remember Lot’s wife!” How he paints the faithless, heartless adventurer, as the profitless ploughman, who, with hand to the plough, is looking back! How he cries out to those of slacking pace, “Ye *did* run well; who did hinder you?” It is, plainly enough, in the life-long elaboration of this great work, that there is the danger of being misled by error, or of giving up for discouragement, or of going back for an unquenched love of the world. One can see that his peril would be where he is to settle down upon fixed and final principles, and to go on after the novelty is off, and the excitement of a first change is abated, and he is to act upon the naked truth of the matter, against the trinity of foes—the world, the flesh, and the devil. Therefore the exhortation, “As ye have always obeyed, work out your own salvation with FEAR and TREMBLING.”

2. We remark further, that *it plainly falls to each to do a peculiar work in his own personal salvation.* Each convert to Christ has his own character to be corrected, his own habits to be mastered, his own exposures to be guarded, his own personal weaknesses to be provided for, and his own peculiar tastes, that the cultivation of years had strengthened, to be battled with, now, and overcome. It is on this very account, that no two have had the self-same experiences in their first conversion. Each has come to Christ, but from his own particular starting-point, and with a history his own, and a mind his own, and therefore with mental exercises quite his own also. And so, in the pursuit, one has the strongest temptation from a quarter where another would find almost none. One brings with him a disposition that has more marked blemishes than another. One has been living under the power of worldly habits, that have injured the very texture of the mind, and perverted the common trains of thought and feeling. One is a perfect novice in the Scripture. Another has known it from his youth up, until its passages have no force, almost, for the formality. Do you tell me that these have no peculiar work to do in their own personal salvation? It belongs to their very personality and identity, that they



should now be called to wrestle, each for his own deliverance, and *that* according to the powers of evil under which they have more especially fallen. One has even to deny himself certain practices, not in themselves sinful, perhaps, but most mischievous to his own mind and tendency.

We see, then, first, that all the work of *self-inspection* comes in here, to be daily prosecuted. This prevailing sense of religion as an *individual* matter, involving the renewal of one's own soul, the conquest of his own passions, the mastery of his own particular foes, and the attainment of his own salvation, is an essential element of piety. The idea that it is *progressive*, not in its vital principle, but in its results—that it is a work going on, an edifice carrying up in the way of Christian edification—this enters into all living discipleship. And as you want to know the state of your flocks and herds, so—only more intensely—you want to know the state of your religious attainments. Examination, and calculation, and vigorous action, accordingly must enter into the work. What is to be done in his salvation, involves the plain matter-of-fact as to what each has, in his own heart and life, to be subdued, corrected, and delivered from. And to know this well, is only a first step; and to keep a close eye upon the progress day by day, is only a natural and necessary step in working out the salvation. It seems to belong only to a common honesty of purpose, that if there be a work going forward, and a personal work, it should be watched, and wrought out according to the aspects of it, and the prospects of success. It is because this is mainly a heart-work, that one is to keep turning within, in nice and critical inspections of feeling, and balancings of self, and weighings of motive and aim. You can see, that they who give up this self-criticism—this minute, private, faithful self-examination—give up the first principles. How can they *work out* what they are willingly ignorant of, and what they constantly neglect in the progressive and successive steps?

So also, secondly, a *self-discipline* is required in this work. They who know themselves, or who are in any habit of self-inspection, will find that their own salvation, to be wrought out at all, demands a vigorous and rigid self-discipline. To be schooling in divine truth—battling the enemy—shaping the plans, and tempers, and motives, by God's Word—treasuring up the *defences* of the Gospel, and putting on the whole armor of God—this is the daily business. To be sitting at the feet of Jesus—shunning temptations—casting aside every weight, and bringing every thought into captivity to Christ's obedience—this is the daily work. And this makes the necessity for "*praying always*," even with the armor on. What can they do who give a loose to their own hearts, yielding to whatever excitements and impulses may any time surround them? No close calculation of duty, or even of expediency, no setting of limits and guards upon their natural tastes, no pleading at the mercy-seat for checks upon their own tempers, and no earnest

effort to overcome their former selves, and to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, how can they be in any training for the skies? Such have evidently no stated work in hand, touching this matter of their salvation. There is nothing which they are prosecuting with steady, steadfast aim, day by day. They are not, like the Apostle, exercising themselves to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man—not struggling to keep the body under. This is not the necessity of a periodical fast, as though it were the season of the year that is to remind the Christian of his fastings. Ah! primitive Christians fasted for occasions in their lives, rather than for seasons in the calendar. When they were brought under strong temptation or affliction—when they were in some special danger of being overcome—when they were going out to some eminent duty—or when they felt the unusual risings of sin within them—then, for their self-discipline, they fasted. It might have been once in a week, or twice; but not twice because it was the Pharisee's custom, but if the soul's necessities seemed to demand it. Who can live the Christian life in such a world, and know nothing of self-discipline, with its special means of grace, its checks, and restraints, and correctives, and yet be working out at all his salvation? The fear and trembling may well come in here.

And this part of the saving work in one's own case includes a constant *self-denial*. Here the Apostle brings in the great pattern, Jesus Christ. Here he charges upon them a humility of temper, where there was every tendency to the opposite. Here he exhorts them to all the Christian graces, as they knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore he says, under the power of such an example, go on, and work out your own salvation; each of you go on wrestling with principalities and powers, striving to prevail against evil tempers, and to overcome spiritual foes, and to bring the soul into some likeness to the Great Exemplar, Jesus. Following the great Cross-bearer, let each man take up his own cross daily, and go on. Like the former process, it is a matter of every-day life. The occasions for it are constantly occurring. You must be denying yourselves ungodliness and worldly lust, and mortifying the flesh, with its affections. He who is not denying himself, is indulging himself in what shall be his ruin. The principle is plain. Do you apologize for your common tastes and tempers, that they are natural? Have you not learned that this human nature is just that which is totally depraved?—that this is that from which you are to be saved, if saved at all?—that the Christian warfare is against the natural appetites and aims?—that one who takes sides with Christ, takes sides against himself, condemning himself, and begging deliverance from self? Then it must needs be no strange thing—this *self-denial*. Then it must be a work immediately appertaining to one's own salvation, and he must be carrying it forward with the

highest energies of his being. He must continue in it with all persistency and perseverance, though it be painful, though it take out a right eye, or take off a right hand. Will you spare yourselves all pain? You will not save yourselves by this, but rather secure you perdition. "He that saveth his life, shall lose it." "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." Do you think it all one, whether you cultivate an old temper, or keep it down—whether you allow an old habit, however mischievous, or strive to slay it—whether you put off the old man, and put on the new man, or not? What effect must the one course or the other have upon your own salvation, as a work to be wrought out with proper fear of yourself, and proper trembling for the result? In this great work, the efficient agent is the most delicate. The Holy Ghost may be grieved by your follies, resisted by your backwardness, and quenched by your worldliness of mind. You will *run the Christian race with patience*, only by *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith*. You will *deny yourselves ungodliness and worldly lust*, only by *looking for that blessed hope*.

But especially, in all this work, and above all, must there be a hearty *self-renunciation*.—Work as you may, and as you must, if you are saved, yet there is not any or all of your work that can be boasted or trusted. Though you be working out your own salvation, still *your only Saviour is Christ*. Your work is always unfinished, imperfect, defective. *His* work is already finished and complete. Think of your salvation, at his hand, as "*ready to be revealed in the last time*," and herein you may *greatly rejoice*. Think of it as *already wrought out* by your Redeemer. Think of him as gone, now, to prepare a place for you, and waiting till you enter upon the full possession. Think of your house eternal in the heavens—your crown of righteousness—your robe, and harp, and palm. This will lead you, more and more, to cast away all human confidences—all trusts in self—all pride of opinion—all personal pretension. Faith in Christ—in his plan, in his power, and in his promise—is to make you *work on*, cheerfully and successfully, to the end. It is He, from his risen glory, who sends forth his Spirit, which now works in your heart.

And these all are items of the work, which admit of measures and degrees. The *self-inspection* may find out to-day more than it knew yesterday of the inner man. The *self-discipline* may keep *under* some taste or appetite to-day, which gained the mastery yesterday. The *self-denial* may cheerfully carry a cross to-day, which was only too much for yesterday. The *self-renouncement* may give up an indulgence, or reject a confidence, to-day, which was only attempted in vain hitherto. And herein consists the constant opportunity for working out one's own salvation.

And, finally, in all that pertains to a thorough *self-devotement*, amidst a world of duties and necessities, there is demand for this progress and execution. Who has *finished* this work already, that

so many are at ease in Zion? Who is yet the specimen of that entire self-sacrifice that we profess, and that the Master demands? In the petty selfishness that is working freely and undenied in the man, how is he working out his own salvation? How—when he devotes himself so sparingly to Christ's service—when he is so hard at work for *himself*, that the work of the Master is *that* most entirely declined and denied? Can you not see that you have a work to do, if you are ever saved, which shall require many a mighty effort, many a large devotement, many a loosing of the grasp upon the heart's idols, and many a relinquishment for Christ, where now it would seem like tearing the soul asunder? Have you, then, nothing daily to do? Was this whole work, in all its immense magnitude, completed in your first repentings and wrestlings, and turnings unto God? Ah! your salvation is not yet *attained*. He that works not out the mighty problem, loses the soul. He who feels no fear, no trembling, only betrays an ignorance of the work in its true nature, and in its awful issues. It demands all the intensity of your minds, all the energy of your bodies, all your ardor of soul, all your helps in the means below, and in the efficient power above.

Hence the high INCENTIVES here given by the apostle. "*For it is God which worketh in you both the willing and the doing.*" Do you shrink away from the work, and say, "I cannot control these tempers. I am sold under sin. These tastes and desires are too strong for me?" But are they too mighty to be subdued by God's omnipotence? *He worketh in you the willing and the doing.* If you would ever quail before so vast an undertaking, with so many hindrances, and so little strength, consider that nothing is required of you without a promise in the Gospel to meet the case. An old Reformer used to have it for his Latin motto, "Only give what thou requirest, then require what thou wilt." You sink in despondency, and say, you cannot work out your salvation. And you cannot, if there be no revealed methods, no warrants from above. You talk of God's will; but "this is the will of God, even your sanctification." Will you say that God cannot enable you? Will you forget the mercy-seat, where you can daily entreat according to daily necessities, and with a covenant covering all possible circumstances, and with promises set before you to plead?

Then, understand the Apostle. God does work in you both the will and the work—both the disposition and the execution. It is all your security that he is the efficient power. It is infinitely better than to have had for yourself the full, supreme control. *His* being at the head, secures the connection between the means and the ends, where, else, you might have used the means in vain, as in your own worldly enterprises. Prayer applies all the divine resources and promises.

And God works in you of *his good pleasure*. This is an encouragement. Do I say that, because he works savingly and freely,

he works blindly, arbitrarily, without plan, without explanation? No. Are you only to know that he works, but all in the dark—no clue to his working? Not so. The good pleasure of his will is revealed; it is expressed in the Gospel. The Gospel is called “the good pleasure of his will, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” He works according to that gracious plan, of which Christ Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life. You have no salvation without Christ’s work, yet none without your own work. And it is cheering to know, that this working in you God doeth, without those hindrances of the Devil which make your separate work miscarry.

And, remember, your salvation is not yet attained in the possession. It is set at the life’s end, to command the highest energies of the lifetime. It is held out from the skies, to lift the soul up from the world. The man is to work it out, with a constant fear and trembling lest he fail, and lose so eternal a prize by negligence or ease. Remember; the promises of the Revelation are only for the man who endureth unto the end—who properly works out, to its consummation, what has been begun. If you desist, you give up all the splendid results.

And remember, too, that one’s own salvation is to be worked out by all this personal, persevering labor, because the salvation *is his own*, and because this salvation itself shall be *according to the deeds done in the body*. A son may have an education given him, yet how different will it be, according as there is application and improvement, or not. One man may have a legacy left him, and yet how it may either be squandered or augmented by the daily conduct. Every phase and feature of each man’s inheritance there, will bear the marks of his own labor here. It will be, in this high sense, according as he *himself has wrought it out*. For it must needs be this very soul of yours, as it is here exercised, disciplined, and expanded, that shall enter into rest, and its own works will follow it. I could ask you, then, if you have no care what *kind* of a salvation you shall work out for your own souls—whether it be like Paul’s or like the dying thief’s. You would care what kind of a *fortune* you shall work out—what kind of a name and character among men you shall work out. And when it is put with you to give a cast to the magnificence of your heavenly estates—when you may now be daily laying up treasures in heaven—and when your capacity for that eternal enjoyment, and your position in the heavenly throng, are surely to be determined by your present living—can you be heedless of such a summons to the majestic work? Regard each day, each act of life, as to be projected on the *scale of eternity*. And how many *ages upon ages must answer* to each *hour*, and get a *shape* from its doings? Who, then, can desist from the work, or who can work it out without fear and trembling? My brethren, *forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to those things that are before, AND PRESS TOWARD THE*

## MARK FOR THE PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.

What shall we say to such as have not begun this work? He that lays no hand to his own salvation, is laboring at his own perdition. He is working *this* out for himself. Late and early, at home and abroad, lying down, and rising up, this one thing he does. In thought, in word, in action, always industrious at this, he is never remitting it, but ever giving it some further perfectness and fulness. Amongst means of grace, and under calls of the Gospel, on Sabbaths and other days, without rest, whatever else he does or leaves undone, this he is working out—working out to its awful completion. No work of man was ever so elaborate, so life-long, so full of toil and persistency, and success. And at the end, it is *his own perdition* that is the creature of his own handiwork—the product of his own industry—the achievement of his own lifetime. Stop this work, we beseech you, and “strive to enter in at the strait gate.” It is made your great duty to be saved—your great sin, and shame, and sorrow, to be lost!