

Faith and Works I

The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts

Col. 2:8

First Things First

Jesus once said of the Pharisees "do what they say, not what they do". In the teachings of the Pharisees there was truth that should be taught. But they had added them together in a system of man-made traditions whose practice prevented the Law of God from bringing about the humility and heart to receive the Gospel.

When a given truth is used in a larger body of information, the information that is placed in front of a truth, and the information that follows a truth, makes a new composite truth. The truth that we are to love our neighbor as our self is an important truth. But it is often used two ways, one way more than the other. One way says that the more we love our neighbor, the closer we get to God. Another says that if we truly have a revelation of God's love in Christ, a fruit of that will be an obvious love, in action, of those around us. Both statements contain the truth that we are to love our neighbor as our self.

And to the undiscerning, just the discovery of a legitimate truth in a teaching is enough to legitimize it. But is the context within the teaching true? Has anything been added, or left out that will influence what we understand? Truth can be used for exactly the opposite purpose it was intended in the scriptures if it is placed in a non scriptural context, or its individual truths are not presented in the correct order.

It is very important that the truths one arranges are in the same order and pattern as they are in scripture. Consider the Bible is primarily a record of history, not didactic religion or theology. And in the instance of the laws given to Moses, that covenant is the one that Jeremiah 31:31 indicates will be replaced by a covenant not like that made with Israel when they left Egypt. The law contained truth, but as Paul points out, the truth of the law was given to bring about just how extensive man's inability to be justified by his own works is, and that without the shedding of blood, there would be no remission of sins. But that is a lesson man had to learn before God showed what He Himself would do when man came to a knowledge of his own inability due to his fallen nature.

History has a linear timeline, one thing happens, than the next, and what has gone before influences or foreshadows what comes next. But often the Bible is approached as a collection of mysterious fortune cookies, and the meaning of a given scripture is often considered without regard for its place in the whole. Do we need supernatural revelation to understand the scriptures? No, we need a revelation of the key, the glory of God in the face of Christ, and it is then a scribe or student of the scriptures can bring forth treasures, both old and new.

But before we can know His truth, we must first have truth in the innermost parts. Light must shine deep in the places we would rather remain dark, because to have that light shine is to reveal our utter and complete need for a savior.

Using the same notes of a given song, one can make endless variations, even changing the original melody completely. If our criteria are just that the notes be in the song we may never hear the original melody. We may also not notice when new notes are added, or important ones that would have been prominent in the original melody are removed.

2 Tim. 1:13 Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

This is also why many people listening to Jesus Sermon on the Mount teachings think a new law of "niceness" is being offered that is a better way to get into the kingdom of heaven or fill our barns with the things the gentiles seek. But that is not solving the problem caused by the fall, of which we have all inherited, and Jesus is not coming along to help us on our way to finally perfecting ourselves or mastering some spiritual technique to avoid the death from the fall that all of us face who are still clothed in our first husband, standing on the old foundation of sand and building with wood, hay and stubble.

If we want the solution God is offering, we must leave, as did Abraham the father of the faith, the man whose faith God says in His Word is the pattern we are to

follow, what we know and trust in, those things we can control and dictate at our discretion, and go into faith territory trusting only in Christ to give us right standing before God, and because of that we can have confidence that He hears us and that therefore we will have what we ask when what we ask is in accordance with His will.

But we are by the nature conditioned by the fall, shopping for faith to avoid the death God said would overtake Adam and His descendants should he follow the devils lead and attempt to exist independently of man's place in the creation in dependence on God. Man chose to seek to sustain himself by learning to be as God operating on the information gained by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is only by Holy Spirit revelation that we grasp the upward call of God in Christ and leave all that we held by the arm of the flesh for that which is received by faith in Christ Jesus.

Jesus did not come to show us how to finally get right the operation of the knowledge we gained from Adam eating of the tree of Good and Evil. Understand the whole premise of that is that man would not die, even though separated from God, but would continue independantly sustaining himself by his operating as God. And getting out of this old pattern of our fallen natures mindset is why God has revieled Himself in a historical timeline. We first fell, then God showed the standard of His Holiness, and our failure by the works of the law to justify ourselves, hense the continual need for the sacrifices of the temple. Then, when man had completely come to the end of himself, God instituted a new living way for man to be restored to his Creator.

And the key is Jesus according to Moses and the prophets, not according out our own contemporary mindset of categorizing everything as an asset to our own efforts at self righteousness. It is still the end of the live inherited from Adam, it is still the need for a new heaven and Earth, it is still the need to seek the higher life that God is offering us in His Son, and no longer seeking our lower recognizing that it is useless for our being re-connected to the eternal life of the Creator.

Jesus is not the door man, He is the door.

Jesus is not a guide, He is the destination.

Jesus is not a coach for a better life style, He is The Life.

Jesus is not demonstrating a way to God, as the demon possessed girl said, Jesus is The Way.

We keep getting this backward because too many teachings have truth in them, but the truths are not in order, putting them as works rather than fruits. Not many are seeking the prescription of the cross and new birth. We need to get our eyes off the external and on the eternal. The fruits of repentance and the new birth need to be present in our lives, but why, how and when they are to be there is the important question.

We keep hearing today that we need to see what God is doing in the world today, meaning we must redefine God and His purpose based on contemporary standards, but God says that what the world needs is to hear and believe what He has done in Christ, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

John 6:29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

If we are not born again, through faith in the Word, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we cannot see the Kingdom of God.

We need to test the spirits, and they can be very subtle, often appearing as angels of righteousness, often coming saying Jesus is the Christ. But just having the name of Jesus in a teaching is not necessarily the Gospel. How Jesus is presented, or pushed to the side in a given teaching is the issue, not whether or not His name was mentioned. The devils in hell know His name. It is believing something very specific about Jesus, and putting personal faith in that specific truth for ourselves, making it the foundation of all that we are, that is the key the devil fears, for that is

the one that sets the captives free, that key alone can open the gates of Hades so that our future is no longer the same as the devils.

John 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

If we live in Him, Paul writes, let us also walk in Him.

First things first.