

Faith and Works XII

The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts

Col. 2:8

The Anointing

Modern day self proclaimed prophets and apostles claim for themselves a "special anointing", and that there is the opportunity for those participating in their ministries or supporting them to share in that anointing. They are creating a dependency on themselves, a captive audience. The sad truth is that this is clear evidence that the majority of those seeking the Christian faith are being led by the very same shepherds Jesus spoke of in John 10, those who come to steal, kill and destroy the sheep, the ravenous wolves Paul warned about (Acts 20:29). It is popular to speak of the devil as the one who is out to steal, kill and destroy, but in truth, the devil is spoken of as the one who has the power of death. He has but one intention, and that is to keep the gates shut on those he intends to share his fate.

There is one testimony that is the key to open the gate to set the captives free, the revelation and testimony that Jesus is the Son of God, and personal faith, rest in Him and trust in a relationship with God through Christ. When we have good soil for the Gospel message, that truth becomes great enough to result in a change in our outward actions as our motivations for why we do what we do are changed at the source, we become obedient from the heart. We then have a peace, joy and hope that passes understanding that the world cannot give. When we can have the eyes of our heart opened to realize our complete need, and His complete salvation, that in Him is the treasure we gladly empty our hands to receive, and there our heart is.

Yet it is the very blessings that people now seek following the teachings of those who claim Godliness is a means of great worldly gain (1 Tim. 6:5), thinking their comfort here is to be found in this world, answering the debt to satisfy the flesh as most sadly are still on the foundation of sand, the old nature, and the things of this world that the old nature seeks and takes comfort in are the very things that can choke the Word of Christ (Matt. 13:22). It would be a mistake therefore to assume that all the devil seeks is to keep people from being consumed with the things of this world. By studying the scriptures we understand that the devil is seeking to

keep people from saving faith in Christ, from discovering their need for Him, for finding their treasure in Him. It becomes clear that the most successful strategy the devil has employed is to delude people into thinking the Kingdom of God is the same thing that the Gentiles are seeking (Luke 12) and to provide opportunities for the love of the things of this world (1 John 2:15-17).

But all Christians, true believers in Christ, those who believe in their heart and confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord, such as these are said to be sealed with the Holy Spirit when they choose to believe the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:13). In fact, it would be well to realize that the most effective record we have of the Holy Spirit working through the church in the book of Acts took place at a time when believers did not even have a New Testament as is now contained in the Christian Bible. Yet John in his first letter makes the surprising statement that the people he is writing to have an anointing and do not need anyone to teach them. And in fact, each believer is to have this anointing for themselves as evidence of their new life in Christ.

1 John 2:20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.

Could that be said of any churches and their members today? Would the hundreds of millions of dollars that those who call themselves Christians spend on the teachings of the popular televangelists continue year after year if they had such an anointing that even the Apostle John did not need to teach them? If such wisdom could be known, would it be in the interests of those profiting from leading the sheep to teach it? Do they not rather seek a captive audience? And yet Jesus said, the revelation of the truth of who He is, and faith in Him, would set us free indeed (John 8:36).

This is a very different state than one finds in the modern religious movements of today where men seek to draw people to themselves on the bases of their claims to have special or anointed insight which all must seek from them to achieve their

success in order to advance in the modern definition of what constitutes the Kingdom of God (Acts 8:9-10). Sadly, the modern definition of the "Kingdom of God" is no longer that of Christ and our abiding in Him (Rom. 14:17), but is now more often than not the age old search of man for the knowledge to become as God, self sufficient in his or her own capabilities based on their own actions guided by the knowledge they have acquired rather than resting in Christ Himself (Gen. 3:4-5).

Often Christians settle for two out of three when it comes to loving God with all their heart, soul and mind (Matt. 22:37). Without knowledge of where the scriptures are directing our focus, without a knowledge of the Biblical context of Scripture and instead hearing teachings with a handful of "cherry picked" scriptures used in the context of a non-Biblical teaching, we can find ourselves mistaking what Paul calls the elemental and rudimentary principles of this world, the spirituality of the non-Christian world, for that of the first century Body of Christ who following the pure Gospel were able to pray for and receive confirmation in signs and wonders that the simple message that they were proclaiming was indeed from God.

We sing songs about grace "falling like rain" and imagine something wet on our skin, and we talk about feeling God's presence, usually at meetings where there has been a great deal of signing and praying. But at that point we are usually doing as the world does, responding to the circumstances of our surroundings. But we can choose to quiet our soul at any time by simply choosing to look at the unseen which is eternal, rather than the seen external temporary circumstances, knowing we can do all things through Him who loved us and delivered Himself up for us that we might be the righteousness of God in Him.

Psalm 131:2 Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, Like a weaned child with his mother; Like a weaned child is my soul within me.

Do we perhaps need to get back to the faith of the early church, and to provide the Holy spirit with the opportunity to glorify Jesus which is the Spirit's primary role (John 16:14) rather than just giving goose bumps to people attending loud meetings where they are working themselves into religious states of excitement? Exciting worship that stimulates the flesh and soul is not in itself a bad thing, for we are indeed at times to praise the Lord with a loud noise (Psalm 147:7), but if we are doing it for our own sakes and not to indeed praise the Lord, it is a poor substitute for the continual moment by moment anointing that is to be our initial point of reference in our faith.

That inner witness from in our spirit that Jesus is the Christ and that we are in Him members of God's family (Rom. 8:15), and because of who He is we can therefore by faith do all things through Him rather than based in our own efforts, confident that not even death can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:38-39), and knowing it is better to be absent from the body and be present with the Lord, freed from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:15), and beyond that, the second death (Matthew 10:28; Rev. 2:11), that all fear when only born once (Heb. 9:27).

Instead of feeding the modern religious machine that uses flesh to move flesh rather than providing opportunity for a true move of the Spirit by focusing on Jesus, lifting Him up even as Moses lifted the bronze serpent (John 3:14) so that all would be drawn to Him (John 12:32), it would do us well to cease racing to and fro from one ministry to another trying to increase our knowledge and spiritual skill, and instead, using that initial anointing John said all had, to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:29-32 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of

His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

The key is in understanding that we are to walk in Christ as we first received Him (col. 2:26). When we come to Christ there is a change that takes place in one who truly believes in their heart and confesses with their mouth that Jesus is the Christ, and more than that, Christ Himself is now the foundation of the believer rather than the faith we once had in our own efforts to one day achieve right standing with God. It is Christ Himself that is the true wisdom that Paul sought to redirect the attention of the Corinthians (1 Cor. 3:1-4) as they slipped into the carnal approach to religion of seeking application of knowledge rather than the rest in truth, just as truth is in Jesus (Eph. 4:21).

For the heart that is good ground for the Gospel, who truly understands the need for salvation having come to the end of its own efforts to achieve right standing with God (Rom. 7:24; Phil. 3:7-8), the heart that realizes the reality of the hope of His calling (Eph. 1:18), the riches of His inheritance, the individual with true faith and rest from the works of the flesh to improve itself with the inevitable pride and competition, jealousy and enmity that comes from the mind set on the flesh, that one will demonstrate the purity of heart that enables true love of the brethren, a love for God and an abhorrence for that which is against His nature.

All these are points that John makes as his letter progresses and he uses terms such "you know". We know because we are anointed with knowledge of who Christ is and have put our faith in Him and so it follows that:

1 John 2:29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

1 John 3:16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

1 John 3:24 Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

Placing our faith in a true revelation of who Christ is, based on that revelation alone it follows that:

1. Sin leads to death, and all have sinned, thus Christ died for all.
2. We no longer can judge or hate those we see, for God has forgiven all in Christ.
3. God loves us; the proof is in His gift of His Son, Jesus Christ.
4. If God so loved us, that He gave His only Son, so ought we to love one another.

Are we looking for unity in the Church? It will not come for mental assent to doctrine or worse, compromising God's written word for the sake of not excluding those who do not hold the doctrine of Christ. The Law and the prophets testify of Christ, and He is the fulfillment of all they wrote. We are to be one in Christ, all equally clothed with Him, members of His body.

When Christ is head of the believers in the church, then there will be leadership.

When Christ is the foundation of the believers in the church, there will be stability.

When Christ is the body of the church, there will be unity.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

All of the above comes from the foundation of Christ, the chief cornerstone, the rock, and out of the rock of Christ comes the living water that satisfies. The word of faith in the Gospel of Christ brings the water forth, not striking with the arm of the flesh, not trying to raise ourselves up to God or draw God down to us. It is Christ in us, the hope of glory.

All Christian conduct flows from a personal relationship with God through Christ.

1 John 3:16-24 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

Heb. 4:1-2 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

The anointing is not the feeling of rest, it is the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Christ which we have in these earthen vessels, which

though these tents we inhabit may be perishing and soon to be put off, we know that as He is, so are we in this world, while we keep seeking the things above where we are seated in Him (Col. 3:1).

Because we are resting in Him we are to be anxious for nothing, not moved or shaken by the tribulations of this world or the tossing of the seas because we have an anchor that goes beyond the veil. That rest teaches true wisdom. Knowing Christ and resting in Christ is far more important than endless genealogies and speculation about issues that God did not intend to aid our efforts to become religious and self-perfected. He is looking for fruit, not works, change at the root, the heart, from which the issues of life flow.

Is doctrine important? Yes, when it establishes that Christ is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. But again, we look to where the scriptures point, Christ Himself, not at the scriptures themselves.

John 5:39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

John 6:28-29 Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

John 11:25-26 "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."

John 15:4-5 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 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."

1 John 2:24-27 Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.

These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

Do we need to become children once again, and return to the first love of our faith?

Gal. 4:19 My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.