

Faith and Works XV

The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts

Col. 2:8

Faith and Works

In some branches of practicing Christianity there are those who approach sanctification as a continual work to perfect the fallen nature to a sinless state. Week after week sermons are preached against this sin or that, and each week many are able to change their habits and cease certain sinful behavior, only to find that the next week, another new problem has surfaced.

At some amusement parks in the arcade section there is a game one can play called "Wack-A_Mole" in which one takes a hammer and hits a mole on the head to drive it into its hole, and immediately another one pops out of another hole needing to be hit. This type of focus on sin, rather than the solution to sin, is full of teaching that contain the truths that sin does not profit and leads to ruin, but they offer no real value against the flesh (Col. 2:16;) because the Axe is not being laid to the root of the tree (Matt. 3:10), just a lot of pruning of the branches (John 15:1-3).

Biblical Christian faith is very different from any other religion in that man and what he does to perfect himself is not the center of attention, nor is his perfection by his own works the goal (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16).

Paul did not say, "I have died to the sin of smoking tobacco", he wrote that he himself had died. And while grace is a free gift, it is the gift of a new life in Christ that can only be lived once we have died not to specific behavior, but to the very foundation of ourselves, placing all that we are, by faith, in Christ. The idea is that you may receive the offer of the free gift, but to make it yours, you have to use it.

Gal. 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Col. 2:20-23 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"

which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

But while it is easy to spot legalism in certain extreme holiness movements, there are many ways that we can misunderstand the difference in Biblical faith to that practiced by the non Christian world as they use the same terminology, but with different contexts.

Christian faith is not an act or work; it is the reason for action. Our attention is to remain on Christ, not the miracle we seek. While Peter's attention remained on Jesus, he could walk on water, leaving the security of his boat (Matt. 14:28-29).

But when we preach faith as a work, something we must do to move from point A to point B, our attention is on ourselves and on our success in how we operate a technique, and further, faith becomes a means to an end, rather than in the Biblical sense, of a rest and assurance in the completeness of the finished work of Jesus Christ, and our confident access to the Father through faith in His Son.

Many today are not preaching and teaching Christ as the way, truth and life, they are preaching themselves and the benefits of using Christ as an example or a life style enhancement which they have successfully emulated or manipulated. How they personally utilized Christ, or his teachings or example is the theme of their message. They recommend Him on the results they say they get as they continue to build on the old foundation. Being born again is to build on the new foundation, and what is built there will be tested by fire (1 Cor. 3:11-13).

Many, not understanding that the mind set on the flesh is death (Rom. 8:5), and thus conversely missing that the mind set on the spirit of life in Christ Jesus is life and peace (Rom. 8:6) are seeking to improve their lives through spiritual

techniques, things they add or do to and by themselves. Christianity is being presented within that category by those seeking simply to profit from selling supposedly "Christian" techniques or principles rather than present Christ Himself who is the new wine. As the market is inundated by what is popular and what sells to the majorities who have itching ears, there is little voice for Biblical faith within commercial religious media which for many is their only reference for understanding the teachings of scripture.

Thus many are missing completely the concept in the same way those that Jesus sought to convey His message to those who were only seeking Him for the loaves and fishes, that He was the way, the truth and the life, and those who would be His disciples would need to pick up their cross and follow Him. In Jesus' day, while He still walked amongst men, that caused many to be offended and no longer choose to follow Him.

Today there is a deliberate effort to avoid that offense as crowds are sought by so called "Christian" teaching that focuses on how to improve one's life on this side of the cross. There is great demand, and many itching ears, for this kind of teaching, and not just in "Christian" circles. Rather than dying to ourselves, and finding our life in Christ, we are often seeking to improve ourselves and seek so called Christian principles to do so. Can living a godly life improve ones circumstances? Of course. But is that what the Bible means when it speaks of seeking first His kingdom before all these other things are added? If the focus is on results here and now, that is the goal. If Christianity is only a means the same end that the gentiles seek, how and when were we seeking His kingdom first?

But today, those seeking to profit from teaching Christian principles as a short cut to the things the gentiles seek (2 Peter 2:3), teach faith as techniques to avoid the cross Jesus spoke of, and thus those following their teachings and ministries never develop true Biblical faith. It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment (Heb. 9:27). Yet if we do not have the hope of the resurrection as our goal (1 Peter 1:13; Rom. 8:23-25) and instead are seeking the best we can

experience now, our focus will be on ourselves and the things of this world and not Christ (Col. 3:1). We will be seeking the lower rather than the higher.

So much modern teaching of faith results in self centeredness and carnality (Gal. 6:7-8). There is always the Adamic tendency of fallen man to keep returning to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil to learn how to become as God, rather than seeking to restore the relationship between God and man that was broken when Adam sought to sustain himself with the life that only intimate communion with God can provide. It is when we rest in who we are in Christ, rather than trying to become who we can be in ourselves by attempting to exercise some technique to change or improve ourselves that we truly are abiding and resting in Christ, and indeed that was to be the focus and purpose of those meeting as the body of Christ and seeking to grow and mature in the knowledge of Him:

Eph. 4:13-16 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

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.

And too often we are asking what we must do to be saved, what work shall we do, why could not we cast it out (Matt. 17:19)? Coming out from behind our fig leaves, exposed and naked, and having to trust in God to be our covering, by His grace, to sustain us, requires risk, exposure, and a coming to an end of our hope in

ourselves, a dying to the flesh (Phil. 3:8). But there are always those who seek confidence in themselves, who would rather trust in what they can do rather than relying on the nature and character of God. They assume if they just find the right thing to do, they could do it and thus are rushing to and fro following the latest teaching, always learning, but never coming to a knowledge of Biblical truth, as truth is in Jesus (Eph. 4:21).

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."

It is not hard to do, unless we have a problem with reorienting ourselves to God as our Father, rather than as a competitor or untrustworthy holder of equally shared resources, which is how the devil convinced Adam to view his relationship with the Creator. This was the essence of the proposition the devil used to persuade man to cease trusting God and instead to rely on himself to replace what man's original connection with God had provided. Fear of death now motivates man (Heb. 2:15), aided by doubt about the nature and character of God (John 3:16; Rom. 8:32).

Many only trust in a relationship they can control, when by their works they can obligate the other party, living by Law rather than accepting salvation as a gift of Grace, and extending that grace to those they formally by measuring themselves by themselves were in competition with, even going to the extent of judging each other to lower them below their own personal perceived standard of works and merit before God in the flesh (2 Cor. 5:14-15). We must come back to a faith in line with the spirits cry within us of "Abba, Father". Fear will rule until Love can sustain.

Heb. 2:14-15 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and

release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Rom 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

Luke 18:17 "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."

Our faith and relationship with God is not to be measured by circumstances taking place on this side of the Vail, but rather is to be an anchor that is secure beyond it (Heb. 6:19). We can be rich in faith without necessarily being rich in this worlds material goods (James 2:5). The one who dies with the most toys does not always win (Luke 16:25). In fact in the economy of God, many who are first in the esteem of men here in the seen natural world of external appearances, will be last in the Kingdom of God, for we are complete in Christ, not our personal achievement or possessions.

Notice in the following passage there is the paradox that while Jesus says His disciples will be persecuted for His name sake, even putting some to death, yet He also says, "Not a hair of your head shall be lost". The modern approach to this passage would be to ignore its original context, and only focus on the positive statement that not a hair of our natural head shall be lost, yet this is not a proof text to use against baldness, there is an entirely different truth being taught here, and the focus is on eternity, treasures in heaven, rather than teaching that faith is about results oriented outcome in our circumstances while still in this world.

This is not to say that God does not bless His children with good things in this world, it is however to say that God's children are already content in the things they know by His word and the inner witness of the Holy Spirit concerning the riches of their inheritance in Christ (Acts 16:25).

Luke 21: 7-19 So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?" And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them. But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately." Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls.

We are to walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). Those walking by the spirit do not evaluate their status by their circumstances in the world we experience with our senses, what we see, feel emotionally, taste and touch. Yet many today appeal to itching ears, the physical natural mind on behalf of the senses, by promising so called spiritual techniques that if exercised correctly will be proven by successful circumstances. Do not misunderstand, the author of this article has himself seen results of healing and even deliverance from prayer in the name of Jesus, yet Christianity is not just about finding a way to get our prayers to work so that we can be successful in this life. The scriptures teach an entirely different orientation.

2 Cor. 16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Our faith should be that in all things God can indeed act, but our rest should be in where we are seated in Christ. (Col. 3:1). Consider that Paul writes that even death cannot separate us from the love of God.

Rom. 8:37-39 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Yet many praise God, or doubt their relationship with Him, based on their circumstances in the natural, without considering that Christ is not a means to get from point A to point B, He Himself is the destination, He is the treasure, and we are not completed by Him, we are complete in Him.

Col. 2:4-10 Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not

according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

Seeking first His kingdom is about our faith and rest in Christ, a peace that passes understanding as there is no apparent natural explanation for it from the perspective of the unsaved, that though there may be tribulations in this world, He has overcome the world, which indeed is passing away (1 Corinthians 7:31, 1 John 2:17).

It is then He can add to us the things the gentiles seek because we will not turn to and rely on them rather than the foundation of who we are in Christ (Matt. 6:31-33). The people who teach faith as a work to get the things the gentiles seek are selling a concept of life that involves sustaining the nature we had from the foundation of Adam. They are coming to steal kill and destroy the new life offered by God in Christ by drawing the sheep to themselves and their teachings rather than leading the sheep to the door, who is Jesus (John 10:7-10). The truth that sets the captive free will not be offered by those seeking a captive audience to sustain multi-million dollar commercial ministries.

Matt. 23:13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

Many who are following these teachings who find themselves in tribulation will be offended, and fall away to something else, some other way, method or teaching that promises the results they seek.

Many sought Jesus for the loaves and the fishes, yet were offended and no longer followed Him when it became clear that the life and treasure He was offering was through a cross that would mean dying to the very life they were seeking to preserve.

Hope that is seen, is not hope, Paul writes in Rom. 8:24, yet many have shipwrecked their faith following teachings that promise that godliness is a means of material gain. The reason is that when we measure our faith by our circumstances, rather than doing all things through faith in Christ, and when our circumstances are not what we expect, we then doubt that we have operated faith correctly or that we have it at all. Faith becomes the object of our attention, rather than Christ who is to be the author, perfecter and finisher of our faith. Taking our eyes off Christ and looking at the winds and the waves will prevent us from walking on the surface of our circumstances.

When faith is taught merely as a short cut to the things the gentiles seek, the end result is always a system that must place fallen man in the position of God. This then is an identical system such as is found in non Christian mind science teachings. All these teachings place reality as a manifestation of our thoughts. Our mind, our thoughts, the things we speak become what we then try to use to exercise our will over reality to attract or manifest what we are seeking.

The bondage to this system becomes apparent when trapped in this mindset, one becomes obsessively and compulsively focused, often in fear, that some improper word might be thought or spoken that will manifest unpleasant circumstances, such as sickness or poverty. Indeed, over the years many of the leading proponents of this movement have themselves succumbed to fatal illness, but such is the mindset of those caught in the circular thinking of this system the consideration of the failure of the teachers to live what they themselves teach is simply another negative thought the believer struggles to keep from interfering with their efforts to visualize and manifest peace and prosperity.

Indeed, a new type of yeast of the Pharisees is seen, that of "faith Pharisee-ism", this one all the more insidious as it can be an internalized pattern of behavior that can bind an individual in circular reasoning that is not, once habitually ingrained, a pattern of thought that ever offers a door out. Those involved in these teachings judge themselves and each other's success at operating faith by the results they see

in their circumstances. Thus in contemporary spiritual gatherings there is much self pride and boasting when circumstances are good, and the assumption that one is not operating faith correctly when circumstances are bad. This mindset can lead to the attempt to control all thought and awareness in order to ensure the manifestation of the proper reality, with the added fear that if ones circumstances are not what one would wish, they now assume they have not worked hard enough in their control of mental thought and speaking, thus this thought system, regardless of the users experience, continually reinforces and feeds back on itself.

So Christians practicing these techniques, following these teachings will often not want to hear of the suffering of other Christians, even though commanded by scripture to do so (Heb. 13:3), or to be watching for signs of Christ's coming (Luke 21:36), as these involve awareness of sometimes negative and unpleasant realities that might manifest in the individuals circumstances if they let their thoughts stray from the images of peace, safety and comfort that they are seeking.

Prayer itself becomes a practice of decreeing what one wishes to manifest, rather than communication with God through Christ.

All these result in a carnal spirituality with the focus on ones-self and efforts, rather than having the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16).

The carnal flesh has itching ears always hoping that some teaching or technique will be culled from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to provide the means (or 'the secret') to achieve Independence, rather than dependence on God for eternal life of our souls, which requires a reliance on His nature and Character rather than obligating Him by a work of our own. The modern orientation displaces Christ's finished work and imposes on man the responsibility for opening the door by his own efforts, rather than entering into God's presence by the door (John 10:9), putting faith not in our selves, but in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Our faith is not to be in ourselves or the power of our words, because these teachings leave us focused on ourselves. Our focus is to be on Christ:

1 John 5:4-5 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Two scriptures are typically used to validate this system of teaching. While a teaching should always find its context in the scriptures, and not the other way around, sadly while our current age is rushing to and fro and increasing in knowledge, this wisdom is often lacking.

Hebrews 11:3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

This verse is not only typically used out of context of the passage of scripture where it is found, but the words in the sentence itself have been consistently interpreted out of context of the sentence itself with the result that many read over this passage of scripture without seeing its literal meaning. It is well to remember that a given teaching should find its context in scripture, and not the other way around. Words have meaning in sentences, sentences have meaning in paragraphs, and paragraphs have meaning in chapters, and chapters have meaning in books, and for the most part there were not even such divisions in the original manuscripts, they were one continuous text.

If one were to read Hebrews 11:3 in context, it would be found to express what Paul wrote in the book of Romans;

Rom. 8:24-25 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

Those who deliberately or in ignorance misinterpret Hebrews 11:3 are trying to present a system that guarantees sustaining the ability to sustain by our own works the life we have from Adam, which of course, our natural ears are always itching to hear, having not come to that place Paul spoke of when truly exposed by the Law in Rom. 7:1-24. Yet Jesus was not presenting this truth, as the slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination tried to imply as she followed Paul as he sought to preach the true gospel (Acts. 16:16-18), rather, the gospel is good news, but not for those with their minds set on the flesh:

John 3:16 "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Being born again is about new wine skins. If we approach Christianity as a means, as did the rich young ruler, of putting our flesh over the top to achieve or control the eternal life that the soul seeks, which can only be achieved by the foundation of the spirit of God as found in the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the words that are spirit and life that the Holy Spirit witnesses on behalf of, than the old wine skins will either burst, or the word of the good news of the gospel will be choked by the flesh seeking godliness as a means of material gain, the loaves and the fishes rather than the words of spirit and life, to sustain itself by the material things that it can see, feel (emotionally), hear and touch, those things that are destined to perish as they are part of the creation subjected to futility at the fall of man from fellowship with God. Instead of a garden that is growing, we are now in a huge system that is through entropy consuming and trading its residual material substance and energy to sustain man until he can receive the grace of God and escape the generation of those destined to perish.

Teachers of the hybrid Christian-Gnostic mind sciences will suggest by this that God Himself is a fellow practitioner of the technique of using faith filled words, that it is a principle in itself even above God that both God and man can equally use to achieve the imaginations of their hearts.

But God performs His Word Himself, He is not using some outside generic force or system, and the Bible explicitly tells us He does not operate on the same level of his creation by utilizing a power or technique they both share in common.

Isaiah 45:18 For thus says the LORD, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited: "I am the LORD, and there is no other".

Jer. 10:12 He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens at His discretion.

Jer. 32:17 Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.

Ezk. 12:24-25 "For no more shall there be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I am the LORD. I speak, and the word which I speak will come to pass; it will no more be postponed; for in your days, O rebellious house, I will say the word and perform it, says the Lord GOD."

While choosing to sustain ourselves may have caused us to be without Gods support for eternal life for our souls, yet the devil continues to assure us that we shall yet discover a way live without Him, being able in our own capabilities, knowing how to act as He does, to sustain ourselves by ourselves. There is death apart from the Creator, but the devil's lie is that we shall not die, because we shall learn to act as God and thus sustain ourselves with the eternal life we lost when in Adam we shifted our dependence from Him onto ourselves.

Indeed, Jesus did the works that He saw His Father doing, not acting on His own initiative, according to His own testimony (John 9:4).

We are not to try to act like gods, but to pray in His will. We need to know His character, nature and written word. We are to boldly come before Him, through faith in our right standing before God in Christ, and the knowledge that He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might be the righteousness of God in Him, and thus knowing that He hears the prayers of a righteous man or women, and so know that if He hears us, we have the requests, in His will, that we have made before Him.

This is very different from the orientation of those focused on themselves and their inner thought life who are trying to change the world based on the belief that as they are made in the image of God that their own thoughts are creating and are responsible for what will and has been manifested in their experience of reality. But this false underlying context for the scriptures is responsible for Jesus being displaced, just as in other religions, off to the side, good for alter calls for salvation, but off to the side when it is on to the business of restoring all that Adam lost by our seeking to become as God.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 16:23-33 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. 24 Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father." His disciples said to Him, "See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!

Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God." Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Prayer is not a mental exercise that we learn techniques to operate. It is active correspondence with the One true Living God, gaining access to God through His Grace, the gift of His only begotten Son, that we, clothed in His righteousness, can thus stand before Him when we make our requests.

2 Cor. 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

1 John 5:14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

And when we are use our authority in Christ to come against devils and situations we do not do so speaking sentences that include the word "Jesus" (Acts 19:11-17), but to the extent we are clothed, abide, and rest in Him, we can effectively speak in His name.

Acts 19:11-20 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying,

"We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

And perhaps more than anything else, teachings that focus on mans actions rather than on Christ finished work, have certainly deprived the body of Christ of the true power of the Gospel both in our personal lives and in our ability to effectively proclaim and demonstrate the Gospel (Romans 1:16, 1 Cor. 2:1-5). Too often Christ is left for the business of the 1 minute salvation message at the end of a meeting, the rest of the time is focused on ourselves and how and what we need to do to get to the next level beyond where we feel we are currently at. Always learning yet never coming to the knowledge of the truth which is in Jesus (Eph. 4:21).

John 5:39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

Usually instead of finding our life in Him, we are trying to add His attributes or methods to ourselves to keep the first husband in the game.

Luke 17:33 Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

Being in Christ, having the mind on the spirit, seeking and resting in the higher life takes place when the individual has come to the end of their desire to continue trying to achieve eternity in the fallen nature. Some come to this place after some event in their life makes them aware of their need for God, while some who seem successful in the eyes of men, never come to that place where they loose confidence in themselves and put their confidence in God through Christ. And there are also those who never in this life were given the opportunity to become confident or content with the things of this world and thus without that temptation more readily sought God's mercy.

Matt 5: 1-6 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: " Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

Another verse typically confused with non-Christian teachings of faith is from the book of Romans where Paul uses the phrase "The Word of Faith". All one needs to do to understand its contextual meaning is to read the entire passage where the scripture is found.

Romans 10:1-13 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes

about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

That word is the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, not a message about faith in words. When the term "Word of God" is used in the New Testament it most often refers to the gospel message, not a message about how to use words like God. Notice in the book of Acts where Peter preaches to the household of Cornelius, the message is described as "The word which God".

Acts 10:34-44 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John

preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins." While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

These discrepancies are more than just a matter of differences in theological terminology. They impact the believer's orientation to the one foundation that is to be the focus of our orientation in the walk of faith God has presented.

The man or woman who can confess his sins, and cast their reliance on the finished work of Christ, places their mind on the spirit of revelation of who they are in Christ (Col. 3:1), and not who they are in the flesh. That is the one who can attend the wedding without being cast out, for they have come to the wedding of the Lamb clothed in the wedding garments made white by the Lamb of God (Matt. 22:12).