

Faith and Works LIX

The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts

Col. 2:8

Good Works

Contents

Introduction	6
<i>John 3:1-21</i>	6
<i>John 4:16-24</i>	8
<i>Matthew 9:12</i>	8
<i>Mark 2:17</i>	9
<i>Romans 3:20</i>	9
<i>1 Corinthians 15:56-57</i>	9
<i>Romans 7:14-25</i>	9
Forgiving Others	11
<i>Luke 7:36-50</i>	11
<i>Matthew 6:14-15</i>	13
<i>James 2:13</i>	13
<i>Matthew 18:21-35</i>	13
The Time for Reconciliation	15
<i>Daniel 9:24</i>	15
<i>2 Corinthians 6:2</i>	15
<i>2 Corinthians 5:18</i>	15
<i>2 Corinthians 5:20</i>	16
<i>Hebrews 3:7-15</i>	16
Loving Others As God Has Loved Us	17
<i>1 John 4:19</i>	17
<i>John 13:35</i>	17
<i>1 Peter :22</i>	17
<i>1 Peter 4:8</i>	17

<i>Ephesians 4:12-17</i>	18
<i>1 Corinthians 13:1-13</i>	18
How Faith Changes How We See Others	20
<i>John 13:1-17</i>	20
<i>2 Corinthians 5:16-21</i>	21
<i>2 Corinthians 10:12</i>	21
<i>Romans 12:5</i>	22
<i>Galatians 3:26-29</i>	22
<i>Ephesians 4:11-16</i>	22
How Faith Changes How We See Ourselves	23
<i>Ephesians 4:17-24</i>	23
<i>Colossians 3:1-11</i>	23
<i>Galatians 2:17-21</i>	24
<i>Ephesians 2:1-10</i>	24
<i>Colossians 2:11-23</i>	25
True Faith Results in Works	27
<i>James 2:1-20</i>	27
<i>Matthew 6:1-4</i>	29
<i>1 Corinthians 2:12</i>	29
<i>Revelation 21:6</i>	29
<i>Romans 6:23</i>	30
<i>2 Corinthians 9:15</i>	30
Being About Our Father's Business	31
<i>1 Timothy 1:5</i>	31
<i>Matthew 14-30</i>	31
<i>Luke 16:15</i>	33

<i>1 John 2:16</i>	33
<i>1 Corinthians 1:27-29</i>	34
<i>James 2:1-5</i>	35
<i>John 6:28-29</i>	36
<i>Matthew 19:16-22</i>	36
<i>John 3:16-21</i>	37
<i>John 5:19-21</i>	38
<i>Ephesians 1:15-23</i>	39
<i>Ephesians 3:14-19</i>	39
<i>Romans 8:31-39</i>	40
<i>Galatians 2:17-21</i>	41
<i>2 Corinthians 12:7-10</i>	42

Introduction

We know that the Gospel is simple, a child can understand the essence, and have saving faith unto eternal life. Yet it is one of the most profound truths known to man, and in the arena of religious dogma, there is nothing but the Gospel that concerns not the search for man for God, but God, out of love for His fallen creation, reaching down to save that which was lost by becoming one with His fallen creation, passing through the death that resulted from the fall, and creating a new union in the risen Christ that once again man could be in fellowship and union with the Creator.

John 3:1-21

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”

Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

Coming to faith in Christ is a matter of spirit and truth, we must let the light of God reveal the need for salvation that we usually seek to hide in the darkness. Jesus presented the salvation He would provide in His death and resurrection to the women at the well. When He reminded her of her sin, she then questioned where true religious works might be accomplished. Jesus then confronted her with the truth that if she would come to God in truth, she would be able to receive that eternal life which all the religious practices of the day were unable to provide.

John 4:16-24

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

The woman answered and said, "I have no husband."

Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."

The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Indeed, it was in the acknowledgement of the need for atonement that the religious leaders of Jesus' day stumbled, for they had come to a point where they believed their religious practices had removed them from the need for the salvation and life that Jesus was offering.

Matthew 9:12

When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."

Mark 2:17

When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

True faith is not only a matter of intellectual consent to theological propositions and doctrine, but is a matter of the heart responding to revealed truth. To recognize the value of the pearl of great price, one must be a merchant of fine pearls. One must, in other words, hunger and thirst for God's righteousness, recognize by allowing light to shine in our inner being and expose the sinful nature there, that we are in need of a great salvation for a debt we cannot pay. Our problem is not that we have sinned and become sinners. The law merely brings about a knowledge of sin. Our problem is that we sin because we are sinners.

Romans 3:20

Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

1 Corinthians 15:56-57

The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 7:14-25

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for the will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!

For those who truly believe there are changes that take place when God's law of liberty is written to the soften tables of our heart when in humility and recognition of our sinful nature before God we turn to Him in repentance from dead works and receive the free gift of righteousness and eternal life in Christ.

Forgiving Others

For those in Christ, the changes of attitude are primarily in three areas. The first is in the area of forgiving others as we have received forgiveness from God. To the extent we have allowed God's light to shine into our inner most thoughts and intentions of the heart, we have an evaluation of the true debt that God offers to pay with the life of His Son. To those forgiven much, Jesus taught, they love much.

Luke 7:36-50

Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."

And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

So he said, "Teacher, say it."

"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?"

Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more."

And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Receiving this forgiveness is only possible when we stop living under the legalistic system of seeking righteousness based on our own works. When we do this, our mind is not on Christ, but on our flesh. When we fail to meet God's standards, the natural response is to seek to find those around us who we can point to as inferior to our own works. We no longer seek God's righteousness, but simply to be the best in the crowd.

Cain slew his brother because his own works were unacceptable compared to the offering his brother had made. We judge and criticize not so much to increase our own stature, but to reduce those around us so that we can be the tallest. Such is the root of all prejudice, as when race, politics, gender, age or religion are used to qualify ourselves by our being in the correct and superior group, and disqualifying others who are deemed to be in inferior groups to our own.

Matthew 6:14-15

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

James 2:13

For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

“But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

“So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

The Time for Reconciliation

By the way, that reference Jesus makes in Matthew 18 is to the prophecy in Daniel:

Daniel 9:24

*“ Seventy weeks are determined
For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of sins,
To make reconciliation for iniquity,
To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy.*

We are in that period where God's grace is offered. It will not always be so, there will come a time when all is brought to a close, and only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will enter into eternal life in God's kingdom.

2 Corinthians 6:2

For He says: “ In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

2 Corinthians 5:18

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,

2 Corinthians 5:20

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

Hebrews 3:7-15

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

*“Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
In the day of trial in the wilderness,
Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,
And saw My works forty years.
Therefore I was angry with that generation,
And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart,
And they have not known My ways.’
So I swore in My wrath,
‘ They shall not enter My rest.’”*

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said:

*“Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”*

Loving Others As God Has Loved Us

True faith in Christ, and the humility to acknowledge our need to be clothed with His righteousness to stand before God as a member of His household, a joint heir with His Son Jesus, is a prerequisite to truly having the love of God, unconditional love, love that acts for the sake of the other, and not for the reward for the act of loving.

1 John 4:19

We love Him because He first loved us.

John 13:35

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

1 Peter :22

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.

1 Peter 4:8

And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”

Ephesians 4:12-17

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

How Faith Changes How We See Others

In the body of Christ, those saved by being in Him, abiding in Him, clothed with Him, there is no competition, pride or comparing one another by each other, for all are one in Christ, it is His riches in glory, His likeness that all share. Those who serve do so out of humility, and love and genuine concern for those things that touch the heart of the Father.

John 13:1-17

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!"

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

2 Corinthians 10:12

For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

Romans 12:5

so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

Galatians 3:26-29

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 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 if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Ephesians 4:11-16

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 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.

How Faith Changes How We See Ourselves

When we abide in Christ our relationship changes not only to those around us, but to ourselves as well.

Ephesians 4:17-24

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Colossians 3:1-11

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Our righteousness is based on faith in Christ, not works based on the foundation of the flesh, for that has been crucified with Christ.

Galatians 2:17-21

“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. 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. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

Our righteousness is based on faith in Christ, not works

Ephesians 2:1-10

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Colossians 2:11-23

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

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.

True Faith Results in Works

True faith in Christ results in works, faith is not a result of works. We no longer evaluate those around us by the standards of the fallen world system. Since the fall in the garden, that system involves man building by works on the foundation of himself to achieve eternal life or even equality with God. But the true work of God is faith in Christ, and true faith in Christ will result in a change of heart from which will issue the fruits of Christian character, love and charity, mercy and grace to our fellow man, and especially those within the believing household of faith.

James 2:1-20

My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

When belief in Christ is merely an ascent to theological propositions, and not of the heart, there is no change of the heart, and thus while there may be changes in actions due to following a law of proscribed behavior, the heart is cold, lukewarm at best. This usually is a result of those who hear the Gospel and find it good news, but it is not given more importance than the things and concerns of this world.

Unless we realize our need for the gift of God, and receive and rest in that gift, rather than trusting in the fleeting pleasure of this world or the esteem or

status we derive from our association with society, we will not respond with the heartfelt gratitude, with the sincere love that Jesus said was the mark of a true disciple.

Matthew 6:1-4

“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

We are not doing Christian works in order to earn God' favor, we are freely giving all because our heart is on our true treasure in heaven, in Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:12

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

Revelation 21:6

And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Corinthians 9:15

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Being About Our Father's Business

The Bible teaches that the works we are to do were created in Christ before the foundation of the world. Unless we abide in Christ, we can do nothing. We fulfill God's plan for our lives not in an attempt to gain entrance into the inheritance of Christ, but instead, we are free to give all that we have on behalf of the work of the Gospel because we are resting in the completeness of the finished work of Christ. If we are motivated by true love one for another, our actions will reflect that, for out of the heart come the issues of life.

1 Timothy 1:5

Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,

Matthew 14-30

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

“So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

“Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’

“But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.

‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

When the parable of the Talents was given by Jesus He was not speaking of monetary sums, or the gifts and talents that we attribute to those who win fame and adoration in the secular world. Far from it. God's kingdom is not advanced by appealing to man's fallen nature by the things that by nature he esteems, those

things the gentiles seek after. He is offering the end of the search for those who hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God.

Luke 16:15

And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

1 John 2:16

For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

If we equate the talents mentioned in the parable of Jesus as the currency of natural talents or abilities, we fall into the trap of thinking that beauty, abilities in music or theater, are gifts of God because God is in need of a way to draw the attention of worldly men who are not seeking God and His righteousness, but seeking instead to establish their own, and seeking the things Jesus said the Gentiles, those without a knowledge of God, are seeking.

Consider that it is usually our reliance on our own abilities and material advantages that often hinder us from relying on and realizing the power of God. We too often are building with perishable materials on the old foundation of sand, rather than building with gold refined by fire on the foundation of rock, Jesus. Instead of seeing ourselves complete in Him, we seek His supernatural aid in completing ourselves by the support of the world system.

Our goal is all too often still the same standards of success that are defined by the world system, and not those of God and His kingdom. When we start to hear those who supposedly represent God's truth teaching and preaching that spiritual success is a short cut to the same things the gentiles seek, we can be sure that we

are no longer seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. We are all too often in the company and counsel of those who suppose that Godliness is not an end in itself, but simply a means of material gain.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29

But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

Our value system, the criteria we use to judge the worth of others, is not to be that of the world system, but that which God has allowed to all who put their faith for their righteous standing before God in Christ. If Christ is our righteousness, if we are clothed with him and only through faith in him acceptable and joint heirs with Christ, members as born again children in Christ of God's household, how can we still hold an attitude of judgment over the works of others? Sin that is committed is the result of seeking the water of life from broken cisterns.

But good works are a fruit, not a work earning pay. We are not being Christ like to win approval, we are responding to the change in a heart that has truly believed the message of God, and no longer sees the level of righteousness of those around them as competition by which they must measure themselves. In that game, the best defense is an offense. And so the carnal religious mind seeks through judging the deeds of others, or gossip or slander, to reduce the value of the works of the competition. As long as we are at the top, it does not matter how high we really are.

But by God's true measure of righteousness, the law, no flesh shall be justified. One is either in the book of life, or not. There is no second or third prize.

only those who have been real, not hypocrites, who allow the light of the glory of God to shine into our secret darkness and reveal the weakness we all have based on the foundation inherited from the fall of the first Adam, only those are ready to give it up, let it go as worthless, and put their faith instead in the finished work of Christ.

James 2:1-5

My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

Jesus, in the parable of the talents, was speaking of the amount of revelation, given, to whom much has been given shall much be required, be careful how you hear, for with the measure you use, shall more be given to you. He was speaking of the fruit that resulted in the lives of those who truly understood that revelation and received it not only mentally, but in the heart. Those who were careful how they heard, were those who realized they had a very large debt that had to be forgiven.

Too many come to the message of Christ and are of the notion that they only need a little help and advice, perhaps a bit of doctrine.

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.”

We must come to Christ to be born again, to start anew on the foundation of Him, not seeking to continue to build on our old foundation of sand. We are trying to build the wrong kingdom, our anchor is not beyond the veil in eternity, our treasures are not in heaven when all our trust and security is in the support and continuance of our natural bodies in this fallen world.

Matthew 19:16-22

Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”

So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

He said to Him, “Which ones?”

Jesus said, “ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”

The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?”

Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

For without faith in Christ, (not faith in faith or faith as a measure of metal focus and conviction as is now popularly taught by those increasingly mixing Gnosticism with Christian scriptures) it is impossible to please God.

Our faith is to be in a revelation we are willing to receive, based on our admittance of our failure before the righteousness of God, and our subsequent need for the complete salvation God offers in Jesus Christ. It is those who know they are in darkness who see a great light, the light of the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Christ, not those who seek to hide from God's light in darkness lest the inadequacy of their works be revealed, their true nakedness before God be uncovered.

John 3:16-21

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

Jesus did not come to teach new ways for men to externally act good, while leaving their hearts unchanged. He came to change men's hearts by revealing the heart of God for His fallen creation.

John 5:19-21

Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.

How shall we neglect so great a salvation? If we feel we are rich and in need of nothing, we are still in darkness, and our heart remains lukewarm. Jesus told the Laodiceans that they needed eye salve to see clearly that they were blind and naked. Only those that know the extent of their illness come to the great physician. And in the case of fallen man, the axe needs to be laid at the root of the tree, we must be born again.

Paul prayed for the eyes and hearts of believer's to be spiritually awakened to understand the value of what God offered in Christ, and the love of God for His fallen creation revealed in that gift.

Ephesians 1:15-23

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 3:14-19

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Romans 8:31-39

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written:

*“For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”*

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.

Because of the great value of the treasure hidden from the eyes of those with no revelation, the man gladly sold all that he had to purchase the field with the hidden treasure. Dying to self is coming to the place where we no longer value or rely on the old foundation of our fallen nature, the sand, but seek to build anew on the superior foundation of Christ, the rock.

We build with gold refined by fire, the fire purges the dross of dead works done on behalf of justifying that old nature that is to be left on the cross with Christ.

In our weakness, not our strength, is God's spiritual power perfected. This is why experienced based spirituality produces few meaningful or lasting tangible evidences of the Gospel. Too often we are asking our faith to follow our feelings,

rather than asking our feelings to follow our faith. Our glory is often our shame. Increasingly the carnal modern church seeks to rely on the arm of the flesh rather than the spirit of God. The Gospel, they say, must be relevant, it must satisfy the itching ears of the modern jaded and complacent audience who can only be enticed to follow those who are entertaining and meeting the standards of what is considered popular in the current culture.

When our goal is to increase ourselves, we miss what God will supply when we rely completely on Him.

Galatians 2:17-21

“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. 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. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

Gold that is refined by fire is when our own works that are preformed on the hope of winning acceptance and approval for our fallen nature are separated from true works done as a response to what God has given us in Christ. We are to share what we have first received, not perform acts of charity in order that God may be obligated to bless us in return.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

God is looking for fruit that will last into eternity. Not a bunch of people trying to act nice so God will owe them a blessing. They need to know that value of Christ, they need to know that Christ is the only option, the only possible solution to man's utter fallen condition. And if they have truly received that truth in their hearts, out of those softened hearts warmed by the reception of God's love, hearts able to have the laws of God written on their now soft and pliable tables, then will come the lasting fruit of love and forgiveness by which all men will recognize the true disciples of Christ. The works the true believer performs will be a response to God's love, not a work to earn it.

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