

# Faith and Works LVI

The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts

Col. 2:8

# Point of View

# Contents

Introduction.....	4
Paul on the Road to Damascus .....	6
Seeing the From the Perspective of the New Birth .....	10
The Viewpoint of the Gospel.....	17
For Those With Ears to Hear .....	21
Other Points of View .....	23
Seeing Through the External .....	26
Helping Others to See the Light of the Gospel .....	30
When Our Eye is Clear .....	35

## **Introduction**

Sometimes we need to see things in the proper perspective, from the correct point of view. Perspective is about where we are standing and how things look from that viewpoint. Everything depends on the position from which we view things. From a hilltop one can see great distances and plot a successful course to arrive at a desired destination. While conversely, in the thick of a dense forest, it can be very hard, if not impossible, for one to find their way, to choose the correct direction to take to a given destination.

The following study is intended to examine how integrity in maintaining the faith of the Gospel needs to be considered when interacting with individual and groups and also when seeking to effectively communicate the Gospel to those not in a traditional Biblical context.

The point of view of those in Christ is a high one that transcends the temporal perspective as the believer renews their mindset from the standpoint of identity and incorporation as a member of the risen Christ, spiritually seated with Him at His position at the right hand of authority next to the Father.

All thoughts that would seek to rise above the knowledge that Christ is seated with the Father far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, and that by faith we are complete in Him when we rest in His finished work, need to be brought into subjection and obedience to Christ.

But while academically it can be possible to avoid theological compromise, yet experientially in our attempts to communicate with those around us by sharing in their experience and viewpoints, we may be shifted from our own.

Indeed, our first encounter with the Gospel required a shift in our understanding of ourselves, and our need for God's salvation in order for us to recognize the Gospel as good news.

**2 Corinthians 2:14-17** *Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.*

**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.”*

## **Paul on the Road to Damascus**

Consider as an example the experience of the Pharisee who would become the Apostle Paul as he journeyed on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).

Paul was on his way to persecute those who Paul supposed were infiltrating the faith of his sect, the Sanhedrin, with a dangerous concept, that of Jesus as the Messiah, Paul was himself being convicted with thoughts concerning the faith of those he had seen undergo death on behalf of their testimony of Jesus. According to Paul's religious training as a Pharisee, the only correct way to view the new faith in Jesus was as heresy and a clear threat to years of tradition and accumulated teaching.

But what of Jesus? Was He indeed a prophet, or was He demon possessed? Even some of Paul's own order secretly held Jesus in high regard. What of the claims that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied by the law and the prophets? What did Isaiah, Micah and the other prophets say concerning the coming Messiah?

And even more pressing was the question of why his order, so concerned with the doctrine of God, were not even watching and anticipating the coming of Messiah, for it seemed that they had evolved their interpretation of God's law over many years under layers of opinion and speculation, until it was assumed that man had all the knowledge needed to achieve the hope of the resurrection by following the law as defined by the traditions of men.

His own mentor, Rabban Gamaliel, called "the Elder", who was a leading authority in the Sanhedrin in Paul's day, was foremost of the modern teachers held in highest esteem, surly to have his teachings included in the revered collection of writings which now constituted the only authorized means of correctly interpreting the law and the prophets

for everyday application. Despite his dedication as a student of his mentor, nothing Paul had learned from this knowledgeable and religious man had given Paul any help to answering the questions that increasingly gnawed at his own conscience.

And yet, when it came to justifying in his own heart the taking of another man's life, to judge him guilty by a set of laws defined by the traditions of men, as when he consented to the stoning of the disciple Stephen (Acts 8:1), Paul was increasingly haunted by the saying attributed to Jesus when the woman caught in adultery was brought before him by the religious leaders for stoning. Jesus had turned them all away in shame by simply saying, "He who is without sin, let him cast the first stone".

Paul was on his way to literally cause more stones to be cast. As Paul allowed light to shine into his own heart, he saw darkness there. He saw his motivations to be based on his desire for personal status by winning favor with man within the ranks of his order's religious leadership. He saw within himself pride on behalf of himself, and not on behalf of the God on whose authority he now supposedly traveled to persecute those who held to the faith of Jesus as the Messiah, a faith to which they testified even to the point of death.

It was perhaps these thoughts, and the conviction of the light of God witnessing to the truth of the Gospel message, that brought Paul to a place where God's light could shine and be accepted, and Paul's own spiritual blindness be revealed. It was a place where he would be ready to acknowledge his need for salvation, and that salvation being recognized in the grace and mercy of God in the offering of the final sacrifice for man's sin, the perfect Lamb of God, Jesus (Romans 7:24-25).

Paul not only came to a new point of view concerning his own righteousness, but he also came to a different perspective concerning the perfect Law of God (1 Corinthians 15:56). He saw it no longer as a vehicle that he could successfully operate to meet God's standards and thus obligate God to grant Him blessings and eternal life. He now saw it as death. He now recognized why the sacrifices in the temple never ceased, that there was yet a final sacrifice for sin that man could not meet through the daily sacrifices of the temple (Hebrews 4:8).

To come to this place he had to let the light of God shine in his inner most heart, to die to the hope of achieving his own righteousness by his own works, die to everything his religious order prescribed confident that in their successful completing man could meet the standard of God's righteousness and achieve eternal life. Paul had to become hungry for God's righteousness. The praise and esteem of fallen man could no longer satisfy him. He began to see his true need, and to recognize the plan God had revealed in the law and the prophets to Himself redeem mankind.

**Romans 7:13-25** *Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. 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 to 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!*

## **Seeing the From the Perspective of the New Birth**

The way we view ourselves and our lives (at least for those who by faith are members of the true church, the body of Christ) is to be measured not by the length of our physical existence, for that is not the end of the path chosen by those who have put their faith in Christ. Christ Himself is the way, the truth and He is the resurrection and the life, all who have put their faith and trust in His finished work will be found complete in Him, clothed in Him, and through Him be reconciled to the Father.

We note that our new life is in the resurrection of Christ, not the refurbishment of our old fallen nature. As is symbolized in the act of water baptism, all that we were before Christ is to be left behind, no longer used as our foundation for who we are, as our new life is hide in Christ in God. Our perspective needs to be from the position of the risen Christ, not on ourselves seeking the next religious or spiritual treadmill hoping to lift ourselves up to achieve eternal life and acceptance or equality with God.

That is the way of thinking and natural orientation of the mind set on the flesh, those who are carnal, and the end thereof is death. No one comes to the Father but through Christ. Coming to the wedding supper of the Lamb clothed in anything else than Christ will cause us to be cast into the outer darkness, excluded from the mortally unbearable light of God's presence.

Jesus spoke of the revelation granted by God to men with open minds and hearts that Jesus is the Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, as being the key to unlocking treasures both old and new from the scriptures. Starting with Jesus as the chief cornerstone for all that we build in our lives and our thought processes is essential to allow the seed of the Gospel to grow and produce fruit.

Any thought that would seek to rise up above the knowledge of Christ is to be taken captive, not allowed to continue its potentially destructive course.

It is the revelation of God in the face of Christ that is the purpose and work of the Holy Spirit to reveal and confirm. It is our receiving that revelation by first allowing the light of God's truth to illuminate the darkness of our hearts and expose our need for God's salvation in Christ, then receiving the revelation by the spirit and believing the message of the Gospel that brings us by faith into spiritual union with God. We are then to continue our walk in Christ by resting and trusting in His finished work as the foundation for who we are and will be instead of continuing to daily live on the bases of who we are in the natural as descendants of the fallen first Adam.

Much of the weight of sin is born by those who still seek to pay its debt by the works of the flesh. But the yoke of Jesus is easy, His burden is light. We must continue to abide in Him, or we can do nothing.

He does not call those who still have the confidence in themselves that somehow, whether they have achieved it or not, there was yet within their fallen nature the potential to perfect itself following the elementary principles of this world.

**John 6:63** *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*

**Romans 8:6** *For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

**Romans 8:10** *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

**John 15:1-8** *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*

*“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*

We notice that the Gospel concerns the good news of Jesus Christ. Not a message of good or practical information that Jesus taught. His sermon on the mount was only applicable to those who would begin anew, as a child, born again, with Him as the foundation. Jesus did not come with a new recipe for bread, or a new way to bake it, He pointed to Himself and said that He was the bread of Life. He was not bringing another religious set of rules to work from the foundation of fallen man to acceptance by God. That will never be possible, for without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. By the works of the law no flesh will be justified.

Adam was told the truth when he was warned that those who chose the path of self knowledge over union with God would die. Through the first Adam, all of his descendents have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is salvation in no other name but that of Jesus.

The good news is about Jesus, not about other things, such as the modern teachings that include Jesus as a mere footnote or example to emulate. He was not primarily a teacher, He was the Lamb of God who Himself takes away the sins of the world. When He taught about the kingdom, it was always beginning with the understanding that those whose names were written in the book of life would respond to such a great salvation with love and forgiveness to those with whom they were formally, when they walked with their minds centered on themselves as the bases for who they were in the flesh, in competition and enmity.

We are not, as Biblical Christians, making ourselves complete following teachings supposedly patterned after His earthly life, rather we are forgiven of our sins because on the cross He took upon Himself the sins of the world, and when He rose, He provided a way, in Himself, for man to be reunited in fellowship with God. He is the way, the truth and the life. What He taught was how those who would believe the message of the Gospel would live in Him.

No other religion has ever presented so great a salvation. No other religion has presented a restoration of man's separation from God on the bases of the work of God Himself. The world's religion have the point of view on man, and what he will do to achieve eternal life. The Gospel begins with the point of view that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and that no one will come to the Father but through Him.

When we abide in Christ, and He is our foundation, as He is, so are we in this world. It is this faith centered on Christ that overcomes the world system and its rulers. The gates of Hades cannot imprison those who have been translated by faith into the kingdom of God's Son. We are members of His body, and He is seated at the right hand of the Father far above all principalities and powers, above every name that is named.

But we are to be careful, lest as the serpent deceived Eve, our minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of Christ.

Are people who have a nice smile, lots of money, the best counselors for those of us seeking to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Gospel of Christ? Or is there a hidden edge to a message that makes man the center of a system of cause and effect in a world devoid of the dynamic of God's grace? In the spiritual realm, are there some thoughts that seem right according to the basic principles of this world, yet in the end, place themselves above the knowledge of Christ? If so, what would be the implications and effect on true Biblical faith?

If we imagine that we live in a world system that blindly responds back with whatever we first put into it, there is little room for our needing a relationship with God, for at that point we, like Him, now know how to operate the mechanics of the system. The doctrine that supposes one's material wealth is in direct correlation to how successfully we feed into the system those material things we want back, produces complacency in those who seem to be rich and in need of nothing. Such, Jesus said, are blind to their nakedness, they have yet to be clothed, have yet to partake of the true food, and indeed, will not be motivated to seek it because of their current preoccupation with the things of this world.

This kind of cause and effect system puts man in the perspective of being responsible for how he operates this system. It puts man in the center, and presupposes that advancement, whether spiritual or material, is a matter of man's will and actions. Yet this is the opposite of what the Bible describes concerning man's fallen condition, in that he could not help himself, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin, and without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin.

**Romans 5:6-8** *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

God loves the unlovely. If you do good to men and they repay you, you already have your reward, but may yet still be poor in the true treasures in heaven.

The Gospel produces fruit as we believe its truth and change the foundation of our motivations. We are not doing to get, we are giving because we have received an immeasurable gift that can never be exhausted.

It is love that comes from a pure conscience that has been cleansed by faith in the finished work of Christ as revealed in the Gospel and confirmed in those who believe by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit that is the true fruit that will last.

James in the letter he wrote that was included in the canon of the Bible asks, if we really had faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, how would we then answer the following questions?

In whatever we are doing, do people see a hope that goes beyond just the peace the world has when its barns are full of the material things of this world?

Do people see evidence that we are complete in Christ, or are we still competing with those around us for attention, self esteem and the things of this world? Are we still insecure, measuring ourselves by ourselves?

Are we assured of treasure in heaven? Or do people see us doing good deeds only for the praise we receive from men, or to earn favor with God?

Do we love because He first loved us? Or do we love to get love in return?

Is our faith, as James asks, resulting in the works of love, forgiveness, an evaluation of our fellow man based on the value that God places on His creation, or are we still evaluating ourselves and each other by the standards of the current fashion and standards of the world concerning what is great and popular?

## The Viewpoint of the Gospel

It is the washing of the Word of the Gospel and not so much a preoccupation with removing dirt from the flesh that saves us. It is the water that Jesus give the quenches the thirst men seek to appease by constantly filling themselves with the temporary things of this world.

Indeed, in both individual and corporate activities in the Body of Christ, the church, those who have placed their faith in Christ and who daily walk with and abide in Him are to guard lest their minds be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

**2 Corinthians 11:1-4** *Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted — you may well put up with it!*

Jesus Christ is to be lifted up, above all other concerns, so that He becomes the center of our attention.

**John 3:14-16** *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.*

Our gaze is not to be on the external or day to day cares of this world to the extent that they would be allowed to draw our attention from seeing Christ and our position in Him.

**Colossians 3:1-4** *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.*

**2 Corinthians 10:3-5** *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18** *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.*

Love, joy and peace are not substances in themselves that overwhelm us as a force, they are the natural response in our lives when we receive, rest and trust in the revelation of God's offer through the Gospel of salvation and redemption in Christ.

**Acts 13:52** *And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

**Romans 14:17** *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

**Romans 15:13** *Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**Galatians 5:5** *For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*

**1 Timothy 1:5** *Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith*

**Colossians 1:3-6** *We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth*

**1 Peter 1:22** *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*

**Luke 7:47** *"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."*

## **For Those With Ears to Hear**

Thus for those who would fulfill the great commission of Jesus to preach the Gospel to the ends of the Earth to every tribe and tongue there must be care taken that each hear the unique message of the Gospel, and that it is not diminished or lost in the translation. The Gospel does not need to be made relevant in the context of other systems of thought or philosophy, it merely needs to be clearly communicated. Jesus Himself is the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through Him.

All that can be known concerning the Creator can easily be seen by the witness of what God has made, and each individual has the inner knowledge that there is yet a divide that separates the fallen race of the first Adam from union with God.

It is those that hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God, who are willing to allow their need for Him to be exposed by the light of His law, those who know they are sinners in need of a salvation that they cannot achieve by their own works, who need to hear the good news of the Gospel. But not all will welcome the good news because of the first prerequisite, that of surrendering to the fact of mankind's fallen nature. If we would follow Jesus, there is first a cross to pick up, a dying to self, turning the mind from the flesh to Christ.

**John 3:17-21** *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.”*

**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.”*

**2 Corinthians 2:15-17** *For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.*

## **Other Points of View**

It therefore may not always be a good thing to try to place oneself in the mindset of another person in order to try to understand their point of view because the place where they are spiritually or emotionally situated and from which they are viewing things may not be a good place to be.

There is much confusion today between what constitutes revelation and relevance. We are not to seek to redefine the Gospel so that it is relevant in the terms of the general concerns of contemporary society. Not all hunger and thirst for God's righteousness because very few are willing to acknowledge that they are terminally ill and in need of a physician.

Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. The Gospel is only relevant to those along any point in the linear progression of created time, who have heard the call of eternity above the din and hue of the noise of our everyday temporal lives. And in seeking to respond to that call, they have allowed the light of God's character and nature, His Holiness, to shine into those inner places of the heart that pride would keep hidden. Those are the inner places that man will usually seek to hide due to man being by nature a child of wrath.

Those who respond to the Gospel therefore have come to the end of their hope and efforts based on the foundation of their own fallen nature. They no longer have itching ears to seek those who promise to show them yet another way to try to improve themselves to the point where they can themselves grasp eternity or earn favor from God by the forced work of their flesh. They are those who seek God Himself to provide a mediator and way out of the bondage to the fallen nature inherited from the first Adam.

**Romans 7:24-25** *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

Emotions and spiritual states of being can be communicated and have influence. People are advised when in a crowded elevator, for instance, when there is an emergency, to quickly quiet and subdue anyone who begins to succumb to hysteria, as states of emotion and irrationality can be contagious.

While it is fun for children to sit around a camp fire and willingly allow themselves to accept fear and be frightened by each other's scary stories, yet in day to day life, there are those who communicate and engage those with whom they come into contact in such a way that they draw those people into the place where they themselves are bound. There is an insistence that someone share our fear. Misery, it is said, loves company. The drowning man will often attempt to pull those attempting to save them under the water with them.

There is in professional counseling circles a disciplined disassociation that is very difficult to achieve but is necessary for those practitioners engaged in seeking to counsel those with psychological issues. Life guards are trained to prevent those who they are seeking to save from drowning both themselves and their rescuer. How much more so is this caution necessary when the root issues are of a spiritual nature?

In order to see things from another's perspective, it is necessary to entertain, if only briefly, the legitimacy of the root concerns behind the issue at hand. If a person's actions are being motivated and dictated by fear and guilt, to place oneself in that person's perspective in order to see

their point of view will necessitate our adopting a position where the reasons for that fear and guilt are valid.

Sometimes the question that is asked can by its very nature implicate the one seeking its answer. For instance, the question "When did you stop stealing?" cannot be answered without leaving the implication open to the responders implicit guilt.

## Seeing Through the External

The Devil is described in the Bible as the accuser of the brethren. We are pressured in our daily lives, "what will you do in the context of a given situation? Our battle is to keep things in the context of eternity and our life being hide in Christ in God. The Devil asks us to question what God has said as if it needs our approval. He then asks us to question if God has our best interest in mind. He then suggests that without relying on God, and instead operating as our own God based on acquired spiritual knowledge and techniques, we will be best able to achieve eternal life in its full.

When the Devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he sought for Jesus to evaluate His mission based on the principles in operation in the world where men based all on themselves following thoughts and doctrines influenced and shaped by the principalities and powers of this fallen age. If one would be great according to the economy of the world system, one must seek the greatness that all men seek. One must impress by outward show, by power over others and drawing men to oneself by satisfying their itching ears.

But while many are called, few are chosen, for the upward call of God in Christ is only relevant and of value to those who have allowed God's light to shine in their hearts to reveal the fallen condition of man and his need to once again come into union with God. Of such drawn from among the children of the first Adam there will not be the numbers that crowd the broad highways leading to destruction.

Those seeking to treat religion as a business and use modern marketing techniques to draw crowds may indeed do so by offering bread and circuses, yet the true food, the spiritual flesh and blood of Jesus, will only draw those who hunger and thirst for God's righteousness. It will fill God's kingdom, but will be of little value

to the kingdom that man would build, thinking it is for himself, yet ultimately, controlled by the Devil.

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

**John 6:63** *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*

**Romans 8:1-2** *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*

This is why Jesus warns that those things that are esteemed by men are despised by God, and those who are first now, will be last in the end. We would base our greatness and confidence in our own abilities, but true salvation comes when we recognize our problem is not our works, but our fallen nature, and that we must seek the greatness of Christ, to be complete in Him, leaving as rubbish all that in the natural provides the temporal foundation for the measure of man.

**1 Samuel 16:7** *But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”*

**2 Corinthians 10:7** *Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's.*

**Mark 9:35** *And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."*

Jesus said to not be like the gentiles in their daily concerns:

**Matthew 4:31-33** *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. It isn't the adding of material things that is the goal or context. It is our abiding in Christ.*

**Romans 8:38** *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 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.*

**Revelation 12:11** *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*

**John 16:33** *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."*

There is only one, who is able and who has born our sicknesses and diseases, and who has taken upon Himself our grief's and sicknesses. there is only one who has tasted death for all. and as death could not hold him, has risen to new life.

We are not to identify with illness. We are to identify with life and healing, and point the way that others might go if they would but open the door of their hearts to God and be reconciled to Him through faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are warned not to be partakers with them. We are to be partakers of the divine nature, taking every thought captive to the obedience of the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus. To place ourselves in a position where we entertain not only doubts and fears, but the system that give validity to those doubts and fears, it presupposes a world in which God has not spoken, and he is not faithful, and He has not summed up all things in Christ. For we are to be complete in Him, our focus and gaze is to be on Jesus.

## **Helping Others to See the Light of the Gospel**

There is an element to the assertion that we must appreciate the points of view, doctrines and beliefs of other faiths and cultures, but to do so to the extent that we grant equal credibility and weight to those systems is not only detrimental to the faith of the Gospel, but in the long term does not provide the opportunity to present the healing light of the Gospel to those places of darkness that have yet to be illuminated. If our desire is to communicate successfully the truth of the Gospel in a context that will be understood by a given culture or mindset, that is a matter of translation and communication, and perhaps of finding analogous concepts through which to convey the message of the Gospel.

If on the other had we are granting equivalency to all expressions of faith and belief systems to the extent we deny the uniqueness and truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we no longer have the truth, only a dialectical process that endlessly progresses through evolving systems of thought without a possibility of coming to a final conclusion. We are ever learning, as the Bible says, but never coming to a knowledge of the truth, which is in Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life. No one will come to the Father, be reconciled from our alienated fallen spiritual, physical and emotional condition of separation from the Father, but through Christ.

The scripture warns of indirect attacks against the faith of the believer through doctrines of demons. Our faith can also be eroded by allowing thoughts that undermine Jesus as the complete foundation of who we are. When we entertain jealousy, envy, strife and unforgiveness, we have first had to accept the point of view that we are competing and being measured by what we have each built on our own foundations. We must be moved from our unity with God through Christ and our completeness in Christ, no longer seeing ourselves clothed with his identity, but instead once again seeking to justify ourselves by ourselves

and our own merits as measured against the standard of the merits of those around us. We once again relate to our lot in life on behalf of a legalistic understanding where we assume that all we have or possess is dependent on our own abilities and merits. This is the mind set on the flesh.

But the flesh, the Bible tells us, profits nothing, it is the spirit that gives life, the spirit of life in Christ Jesus that sets us free from being in bondage and a debtor to the old nature inherited from the first Adam. Those seeking to justify themselves will become white sepulchres, hiding the dead man's bones underneath a veneer of self righteousness. Love will be a performance, forgiveness, the avoidance of acting offended. This is not the worship of spirit and truth that the Father now seeks.

The fruit of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, for those who have made good soil for the reception of the revelation of Jesus Christ, is a sincere love of the brethren. By your love for one another, Jesus said, the world will know you are my disciples. If we love those who love us, what merit is in that? To love as God has loved us is to love those who may still be in denial and at enmity with God. For while we who have received Christ and put our faith in Him were forgiven when Jesus took all of mankind's sins on the cross with Himself, God making Jesus sin, not counting our transgressions which were beyond our own ability to heal, against us, that we might become through identity and abiding in Christ through faith, become the righteousness of God in Christ.

**2 Corinthians 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.*

This is why we are to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, why it is vital to be in fellowship with the body of Christ where all the gifts of the spirit are at work to build each member up to the full stature of Christ. The account in Acts chapter 5 of Ananias and Sapphira his wife demonstrates the seriousness of compromising the true bases of fellowship through the witness of the Holy Spirit with the unity of the body of Christ, the true church and bride of Christ.

Any spirit or attitude which brings attention away from Christ and back on the value of man based on his works and his approval of man or his possessions displays as James says, a faith without true works or resulting fruits. In the kingdom there are those who in the world's estimation are first, but who will be last. God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise that the wisdom of God and the power of the Gospel may be to the glory of God, not to man. He does not offer us another version of religion dependant on man's ability so that we may attempt to make ourselves great. He seeks those who would share in the greatness of His Son, to become complete in and clothed with Him.

Biblical faith in God is not a matter of interchangeable semantics. No one comes to the Father but clothed in and through Christ. Nor when we seek to minister the Gospel should we ever mistake sympathy with empathy. A doctor does not himself need to succumb to a patients disease before being able to administer the appropriate remedy. We do not need to share in the fear of those still full of unbelief and driven by the devil through fear of death, nor do we need to stand where they stand, still in the city of destruction, still in a famine for the true life of God. We are to remain outside the camp, presenting a message that is unique, and acceptable only to those who in spirit and in truth have recognized their need and received the message and truth of the Gospel.

**1 Thessalonians 2:13** *For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.*

We are to be ambassadors for Christ, not presenting ourselves for in ourselves we are of like nature to all fallen men, even as the apostles are recorded as saying in the book of acts to the crowds that were attracted by the miracles God worked through them. Note how different the humility of the first century Apostles contrasted with those who would promote and market themselves, presenting Godliness as a means of great gain to those with itching ears rather than those with a broken and contrite heart.

**Acts 14:8-18** *And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked. Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.*

*But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them.*

**Jude 1:23** *but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.*

**Galatians 6:1** *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*

## **When Our Eye is Clear**

A prerequisite to helping others is to be able to offer the help we have ourselves received. We are to take the splinter out of our own eye, not share in the blindness of those we are trying to help. If we find ourselves thinking like those to whom we are attempting to speak truth, we must remove ourselves from their context, and move back to the context of the truth of the Gospel which is the historic Jesus crucified and resurrected for the sin of mankind according to the law and the prophets. He is the light of the world, and by faith in Him, His righteousness is ours once we come to the end of dependence and reliance on our own.

Paul speaks of the restorative effects of the Gospel when he writes to the Corinthians and says "such were some of you". But of those acts, Paul also writes "things which are not profitable to mention".

How often have we heard so called testimonies where each speaker tries to outdo each other in the graphic details of their sinful life before salvation? In truth, the most righteous amongst us who is without Christ is equally deserving of hell. He is the reality, not the dirt and grit of the street. Those can be washed off in wholesome fellowship and administration of the Gospel.

While we look for and eagerly anticipate the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, if we become overwhelmed by focusing on the ever increasing birth pangs of tribulation that Jesus said would come first, we may quench the joy of our salvation and be burdened by the cares and worries of this world rather than looking up and rejoicing in the knowledge that our redemption draws nigh. We are always to be ready to give a reason for the hope that is within us, but hope that is already seen is not hope. We must continue to look at the unseen things of the spirit which are eternal, not become overwhelmed with the cares and worries of this world by looking at the perishing temporal things.

The Christian walk is all a matter of where we stand, the place of our viewpoint.

**John 16:33** *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.”*

**1 John 3:2** Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

**2 Timothy 1:12** *For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*

**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.*

**Revelation 12:11** *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*

**2 Corinthians 5:7-8** *For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

**1 John 5:5** *Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

All Bible quotes (if any) from:  
New King James Version (NKJV)  
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.