

Faith and Works LVIII

The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts

Col. 2:8

The Race

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Introduction

While in this life those who are born again are to be a witness for Christ to those who do not yet know Him, and to not be personally disqualified on the journey. We are to keep our eyes fixed straight ahead, not looking back, on that path on which there will be physical death, should the Lord's return take place beyond our allotted time and sojourn on this earth in these physical tents, our mortal bodies.

But there is also a death to our inner foundations of the soul, replaced by faith in the witness of the revelation of God in Christ that we now recognize in God's word, the Bible, and in our inner man, our spirit now joined with His, that inner knowledge that joined by faith in Christ, we are now members of His household, joint heirs with Him, and that God is now our Father.

We are to keep building up on the foundation of Christ Himself. Buildings of pride and ego concern only those things build on the old foundation of sand.

What is true saving faith in Christ? In the last days, Jesus asked, when He would finally return, would He find true faith on Earth? And how what is the life, the fruits produced from the truth of the Gospel believed and allowed to grow in good soil free of weeds and distractions?

Our actions can be pragmatically directed by our intellect. Man can be good when it is in his best interest to be good. But this is not a fruit, it is a work. Acting good to be treated as a good man, but not being good because of a changed heart. We can mentally agree to direct our actions on behalf of a proposition with which we agree. The Gospel, on the other hand, produces change, fruit, when it is truly believed, by changing the heart out of which come the issues of life.

Running the True Race

Growth is progress on the journey to our final destiny. If what we do is on behalf of treasures kept in heaven, our eyes will be on Christ, the author, perfecter and finisher of our faith. Treasures acquired and stored in physical barns in this current fallen world system will bind our hearts, our focus and attention on the cares and worries of this life where rust and moth and thieves can take away the things we trusted in for our support.

All too often, like those seeking more of the loaves and the fishes they had been fed by Jesus, we seek to name Him as king of our own kingdom in order that He might keep it going, make everything always work out alright. If we were honest, we would realize that we are really seeking to make Him the custodian and caretaker of our own kingdoms. We usually seek to enlist His help based on our own assumed righteousness and good works. We do not seek His kingdom and righteousness.

But Jesus says we are to seek first His kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6:33). But we cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). He who seeks His higher life will lose his lower, we must pick up our cross, dying to all that we previously trusted and hoped in, all that we previously sought according to the elementary principles of the world system to place our hope, to these things we must leave as worthless, no longer putting confidence in the flesh, and place our faith instead on our new life hidden in Christ in God. It is only then we can be His disciple, and run in a straight line, no longer double minded, the race that He has called us to run.

5.1 Corinthians 9:24

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

Timothy 4:7

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

7.Hebrews 12:1

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Where is the Finish Line?

Why does a man hope for what he can see, feel, and touch with his physical senses? He has his reward. If we are to be always ready to give a reason for the hope that is within us, our hope and focus is to be in Christ Himself, in whom we are to abide by faith for all that we are, our support, our identity, before God and in the body of Christ, which is the true church.

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.

Matthew 6:19-21

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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.

We come to the place where we can truly receive the upward call of God revealed in Christ when we are ready to step out of our boat, leave the comfort and security and protection of manmade cities and dare to go outside the camps that man creates in society to gain approval by measuring themselves by themselves. We look instead for the heavenly city whose builder and foundation is God Himself.

2 Corinthians 4:6

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus 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.

Luke 9:23-26

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.

Luke 9:62

But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Philippians 3:12-14

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 11:8-10

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Hebrews 11:13-16

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Hebrews 13:12-13

Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

John 14:1

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

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.”

When we have truly received Christ and abide in Him, it is then we can work on behalf of His authority.

John 15:1-4

“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.”

Acts 3:6

Then Peter said, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”

Provision for the Journey

We must seek the power of the Holy Spirit on behalf of God's desire that the word of Christ be confirmed, that men would turn from darkness and believe on the testimony that Jesus is the Christ, that there would be no blank pages in the book of life. But often we, like the sorcerer Simon (Acts 8:18-19) seek spiritual power for the continuance of our own kingdom of sand, to perhaps keep the waves from washing it away, rather than giving it up, and seeking the kingdom of God, building on the foundation of Christ, the rock.

There is still a hope that the modern church, though for the most part resembling best the Laodicean church in the book of revelation, would rediscover the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3), taking every thought, in this age where information is exponentially increasing (Daniel 12:4), to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4).

To reflect the likeness of Christ we must turn our attention, heart, mind, soul and strength, to Christ. Even as Moses lifted the bronze serpent in the wilderness for those who acknowledged they were under a curse and in need of a salvation beyond what they could provide for themselves, so must Christ be lifted up and be the focus of all who would as ambassadors of Christ share the word of reconciliation.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Eyes Fixed on the Prize

Most of the examples of faith that we see in Hebrews concern those who acted on behalf of a faith in something they would not see before the end of their existence in the tent of their mortal body, the vehicle they would use to travel to the end of their temporal mortal existence following God's path for their lives. It is never the broad path that many follow that leads to destruction.

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Romans 8: 24-25

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

1 Peter 3:15

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

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