

Faith and Works LXII

The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts

Col. 2:8

Cost and Effects

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Introduction

The Bible says that God is looking for proof of the impact of the Gospel on a soul that both believes its message and recognizes its need for salvation in Christ by stepping out of the darkness and allowing the light of God, and His revealed law, to expose the sinful nature. For without Christ, we fallen men are without recourse. We must continue to depend on ourselves and seek the knowledge necessary to operate as God and secure our place in eternity.

But that place is in the presence of God, who fills all and is in all and in whom, as His creation we naturally should live and move and have our being. But man believed a lie and rejected God, and sought to sustain himself without God by himself seeking the knowledge to learn how to support himself as did once God. And so we pretend to know how to gain access to the household of God, yet without needing to confront Him as He is and as we are.

What is the Gift of The Gospel?

In the Gospel man, who seeks to live and escape the death inherent in his fallen nature, must die in order to inherit the eternal life that God offers those who would be married to Christ, and clothed with Him, who would leave as dead their old foundation crucified with Christ on His cross that they might begin to build on the new foundation of Christ Himself.

Whenever religion becomes just a means to better build on the old foundation, whenever we turn to God's help to bless our marriage to the first still living husband (Rom. 7:1), we are no longer in true saving faith in Christ. This is because we do not recognize who He is, and the part He plays in the only possible scenario for our salvation and reconciliation to once again being in union with God.

It is not reward that God is waiting for us to earn, it is a position and building, on the foundation of His Son, that God is waiting all to choose over the temporal foundation we have inherited from the first fallen Adam.

It is one thing to believe that He exists, and it is another thing to believe that one is crucified and risen with Him, seated in the heavenly realms at the right hand of the Father, a joint heir with Christ having been born again by faith in His finished work in which we see ourselves complete, no longer seeking to finish the work of trying to build an eternal dwelling on the old foundation according to the elementary principles of this world.

Colossians 2:6-10

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

Galatians 3:1-9

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? — just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

How Does One Hold The Gift of The Gospel?

Constantine went out to conquer temporal kingdoms in the sign of the cross. Prior to that the choice of those who were confronted with the Gospel involved choosing between temporal convenience and accommodations in this life, and the hope for the imperishable eternal riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

One can be sure that if choosing to publically confess belief in Christ will result in loss of family, friends, property, and even one's life, as is the case in much of the world today, one will certainly take the time to count the cost and understand the faith they will publically profess. Salvation in Christ is a free gift only for those with a heart empty of all other concerns that it may fully hold the gift of new life in Christ.

Mark 13:13

And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

John 3:18-21

"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."

John 12:25

He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

2 Corinthians 2:14-16

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.

Luke 12:49-53

“I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”

When the choice of receiving the Gospel no longer requires a distinction to be made between this temporal life and eternal life in Christ, but rather becomes merely an enhancement to ones current life style, perhaps a nice addition added to what we are building on the old foundation of sand, we have become nominal Christians, those for whom Jesus has been reduced to only a religious leader or teacher, rather than the way, truth and life and but by Him, no one can come to the Father.

We are thus, when in this mindset, not born again in the Biblical sense, we are trying again, in the religious sense common to the natural inclinations of fallen man. And our natural fallen predisposition is to accept religion only when it demonstrates practical results according to our ingrained agenda to continue to try to build an eternal dwelling out of our fallen temporal existence. True Christianity is not a short cut to the things that Jesus said the Gentiles seek, because while the

Gentiles think they live on the foundation of these temporal things, the reality and life is in Christ.

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.

If choosing to name Christ as Lord and savior and living by faith in Him for ones salvation and right standing before God will both promise eternal rewards, but perhaps cost all that a man may possess in terms of material possessions, it is hard to understand how in our "enlightened" modern age, so wise with ever increasing knowledge and supposedly new spiritual insights and new revelations, could mistake the Gospel for simply a means of great gain in the things of this world.

Luke 14:27-29

And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it — lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him

Galatians 2:18-20

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.

Those who seek to get rich in this world have their hearts set on the things of this world. Their hope is that they may continue living within their earthly tent, sustained and comforted by pleasant circumstances and material possessions.

When our foundation of who and what we are is the sand inherited from the fallen first Adam, our concerns center around what we must wear for clothing, what we must eat, where we shall live, what people think of us, who is better than us and who is not. These are the fruits of the mind set on the flesh rather than the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. We are content when we can rest assured that our barns are full and we are rich and in need of nothing. Such a superficial and temporal religion will never provide the kind of peace comes through a Biblical faith in Christ.

Philippians 4 :11-13

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

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 Peter 1:13

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ

Surely one of the devil's best strategies has been to take the momentum of religion that is naturally inherent in man and move its focus and direction from one

of eternal considerations against the temporal, to one that is simply a selection of choices within the temporal world system itself.

So then, religion simply becomes an accommodation, or a facilitator for living a better life in the here and now. It has a utilitarian purpose serving the greater reality and truth that being sustained and supported by the things and circumstances of this life is of the utmost importance.

The choice in the Gospel is always between serving God, or mammon, or whatever represents our hold on the things of this world that we depend on for our physical, emotional and even spiritual support. When we become rich in the things of this world, we tend to trust in the ability of those things to sustain us and provide contentment and happiness. We no longer hunger and thirst for God's righteousness, we are no longer seeking those things that are unseen and eternal, because we become quite preoccupied by the external things we experience through our physical senses, the temporal things, and so the seed of the Gospel is choked by the cares and concerns for the things of this world. Friendship with the world is enmity toward God. We are no longer dependant on God as our foundation, we are telling our soul be at ease, take your rest, for you have many good things stored up in your barn.

Matthew 6:25-33

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?”

“So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”

“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.”

Luke 12:13-34

Then one from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’

“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?"

"And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you."

"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

If we are to seek first the Kingdom of God rather than all the things the gentiles seek, those things they seek, what they will wear, what they will eat, are not the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God is something that must be sought elsewhere, and in fact, it is in Christ Himself. He is the treasure for which we are to gladly let go of all our hold on all other temporal gain, considering them but rubbish compared to the surpassing greatness of the riches in glory in Christ in whom by faith we are complete and joint heirs in the family of God, no longer slaves, but children of God the Father.

Gratitude is the Natural Response to the Gift

True Christian love and service are actions not performed on behalf of the rewards to be earned, but rather they are the result of a heart no longer made of stone, but softened by the mercy and love of God, and which understands and responds to the great debt that was paid, of the riches that have been bestowed as one partakes of the divine nature through faith in Christ, and it is a heart thus transformed that then has the law of God written on it, and is not motivated to act loving in order that God would repay with His love, but rather loves, because God first loved us when He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever would believe on Him would not perish but have eternal life.

The Gospel produces fruit, it is not a religious carrot, not an enticement being made with a conditional reward should one's religious works meet a certain standard, for by the works of the law, the Bible teaches, no flesh will be justified. The law of God was not given to provide a way for people to make themselves perfect, but to bring about a knowledge of sin.

This is why John the Baptist came preparing the way for the Messiah by preaching a baptism of repentance, not just for sinners, but including even those who were considered the most successful at keeping the laws and man-made traditions of the day. It is not the well who need a physician, but those who know they are sick, it is those who hunger and thirst for God's righteousness who will be satisfied, those who know they are in darkness will recognize and see the light of the Glory of God in the face of Christ. It is those who know of their need for a savior, who gladly when they find it, recognize the pearl of great price, gladly give up their hold on all that they possess that their hands might be emptied to receive the gift of God. And it is where that treasure is that their hearts are.

Matthew 13:44

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Matthew 6:21

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Christian character is thus the fruit of the Gospel received in good soil that is free from being choked by the concerns of this world and by habitual dependence on the weak and elemental things of this world. It is the actions and motivations of people who have freely received who then freely give not out of compulsion, but from a willing heart.

1 Timothy 1:5

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

Luke 19:8-10

Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."

And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

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."

The Gift That Is Not Earned

Eternal life in Christ is not a new religious goal for us to work towards, He is a new mode of being that provides the foundation of who we are and thus changes our character and how we relate and act towards ourselves, each other, and God.

Many people often ask, if God is a loving God, why would He cast any of His creation into Hell? But it is man, created in God's image with free will, who chose to relinquish his reliance and union with God, seeking instead to attempt to sustain himself by becoming as God in that man himself sought to be the source and standard for good and evil. Man sought to replace God, whom he rejected, with himself, in the hope that knowing good and evil as God, man would himself be as God, his own foundation.

In God we are to live and move and have our being, but it is man who sought to cloth himself with fig leaves, and it is God, who in His great love and mercy, gave His only begotten Son, so that those who had the courage and humility to come into the light of His presence and have their nakedness revealed, who would then be able to be clothed with Christ Himself. And in that new likeness and in that new nature man was then to relate themselves to fellow members of Christ's body and to God not as servants, but as joint heirs with Christ, having all things in Him.

Colossians 2:9-11

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

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.

And being certain of that great treasure in Christ, we no longer walk with the carnal mind, we are no longer in competition with each other for the weak and

worthless elemental things of this world such as the prestige we can win by earning the approval of others for our outward appearance, our abilities or possessions as measured against those around us. We no longer gossip and slander or seek the downfall of those around us that we might seem taller when compared to their fallen condition.

This is the Christian faith, and because of the object of that faith, the world is truly overcome by the true Christian believer, for the true Christian believer overcomes by the word of their testimony, and they do not love their temporal lives, even unto death.

The Nature and True Value of the Gift

Christianity is not presenting a solution for temporal death. It is appointed to all men to die once, then comes the judgment. The Devil controls and manipulates the hearts and minds of men through man's ultimate fear of death. And the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. The Devil goads and prods mankind along the course he chooses by manipulating the ultimate fear man has of coming to the end of the support provided by this temporal existence.

Man has an eternal component, and he knows of an innate need to come in contact and union with God so that He may once again support us as it was before the fall. For in Him we are to live and move and have our being. The Bible reminds us we are not to fear those who, after they have killed the body, can do nothing, but rather to fear Him who after He has killed has the power to cast into Hell, the second death.

The reward for Biblical faith is not measured by temporal wealth and riches and an indefinite continuation of the life lived in this tent that we call the flesh; but rather, our daily needs are met - not as the payment given to slaves due for their work, but as the normal care given by God to His children who entrust themselves to the care of their heavenly Father. He offered His only begotten Son in His great love that we might by faith be united in Him through Christ, and, having received that great gift, and recognizing it's cost to God, trust in Him to provide all the other daily needs of His children.

Romans 8:31-32

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?

Letting Go to Hold More

People will ask a reason for the hope that is within us when we are content with the riches in glory in Christ Jesus. They will not do that if they see someone rich and in need of nothing in the things of this world. There is no need to ask why someone is content when they have all the things that Jesus said the Gentiles seek.

What people should be asking is why, when we see rich and famous people who are still not content - who go through one divorce after another, who have substance abuse problems, whose outlook on life is dismal and nihilistic - why have all these things they have acquired not lead to the satisfaction we all think we will have if only we too could ourselves win the praise of men or stuff our barn full of such good things? Riches can make living easier, as there is not the burden of dealing with the mundane issues of basic survival, but they do not make life any more worth living or satisfying.

There is also the case to be made that those who have no choice but to trust in the mercy and love of God for their needs find an everlasting relationship and a peace that passes all understanding. Those who are content in their temporal circumstances, who feel they are rich and in need of nothing, do not find the satisfaction of those who hunger and thirst for God's righteousness.

Blaise Pascal once wrote, "There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus"

We live in an age where there are so many things to fill our barns than was the case in Pascal's day. There is so much stuff that one will never come to the end of the things he or she might turn to in order to seek satisfaction and contentment. It is only when we come to the end of our hope in the things of this world that we will seek the hope that is not of this world, and that hope in turn will change everything about how we live in the present.

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.

1 Peter 1:1-25

To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into.

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”

And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

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, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because

*“All flesh is as grass,
And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.
The grass withers,
And its flower falls away,
But the word of the LORD endures forever.”*

Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

James 1:1-11

*James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, Greetings.
My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing
that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its
perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If
any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally
and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in
faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea
driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will
receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in
all his ways.*

*Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his
humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no
sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass;
its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man
also will fade away in his pursuits.*

1 John 2:15-17

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the
world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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. And the world is passing away, and the
lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

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.

Matthew 13:2-9

Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

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