

Faith and Works LXVIII

The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts

Col. 2:8

The Maturity of the Believer in Jesus Christ

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Introduction

We who are members, by faith, in the body of Christ, are instructed in the Bible to be building ourselves up in our most holy faith in Christ, unfortunately, the natural mind is predisposed to seek ways to build itself up in its own capabilities and strengths.

And while there is a lot of positive affirmation and self help through the encouragement of positive self esteem and relationship counseling based on the social contract, little, if any of it, is the true spiritual food that made the New Testament church not only strong but united in its stand and witness for the faith and hope in the good news of Jesus Christ.

There is a very subtle difference between saying that through God's help or advice one has increased in their own capabilities and talents, and therefore can do all things, and one such as the Apostle Paul who wrote "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, but not I but God who works in me and through me to do His will".

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

1 Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Romans 15:17-19

Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient — in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

The modern methodology toward spiritual wholeness would be to believe in one's self, for God believes in us. Whereas the true New Testament orientation would be to believe in Christ, and with Him as the foundation for who and what we are, we then do all things through faith and rest in Him.

There is a very generic spiritually being presented now that passes itself off as a modern and relevant Christian religion.

Its goals are to sustain and perpetuate the temporal man, to measure ourselves by the outward external things, which the Bible says are perishing, but which many have even reached a point of thinking in their misinterpretation of the teachings of the Bible to conclude that their goal is a faith that will enable them to continue forever in their current abode.

A self help market cannot do any more than draw attention to the self. A Christ centered ministry will be drawing attention to Christ. There are two different kinds of maturity that will be reached in these two different situations.

It will be our goal here to discover the kind of anointing and maturity that the Apostle John indicated when he wrote to a first century church and said that they had reached the point where they had no need of anyone to teach them. And where Paul spoke of the stature that all believers individually and corporately were to have achieved in maturity in Christ.

The anointing John wrote of, is the witness, and the believers reception of, the testimony of Jesus by the Holy Spirit who witnesses in our inner man of the truth of the message of the Gospel, who takes of what is Christ's and reveals it unto us. That anointing is the treasure in the earthen vessel, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. That anointing, when truly received in a heart that hungers and thirsts for God's righteousness, and which fully realizes its own incapability of justifying the flesh by the works of the law, that can teach all of the principles and attitudes that the Bible speaks of as the true fruit of those who have a revelation of and personal faith in, Jesus Christ.

Because we know of the great need for all men to be forgiven, including ourselves, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, therefore we forgive as God has forgiven us. Because we realize the great sacrifice that God made in giving His only begotten Son on behalf of the sins of His fallen creation, we in turn, in response the love that God has shown us, love those around us. Jesus said, by your love for one another, the world will know you are My disciples.

John 13:34-35

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

And by the virtue of all being in need of the full and complete salvation that Christ offers in Himself, so there is equality, and no more division in the unity of the body of Christ. To this end, that we renew our minds to the Biblical standard of what Biblically constitutes maturity in the body of Christ, the following study is presented.

The Gifts and Calling of God

As religious practice often focuses on external traditions concerning the corporate and individual conduct of those seeking to live out and express their faith, often there are disagreements concerning what, if any, gifts or operations of a supernatural nature are to be expected or experienced in the daily life of the believer.

These concerns usually become included in the doctrines of denominations as men reason and choose this or that understanding, even though the bible clearly teaches that it is the Holy Spirit Himself who chooses and appoints gifts within the body of Christ as He wills.

We are not really going to be affected and influenced by everything God has for the believer in Christ, and understand the believers completeness in Christ, until there is a focus on the kingdom of God rather than the kingdom of man. That kingdom involves awareness of the reality of eternity, and a concern for eternal things such as eternal union or separation from God. The eternal concerns of the Christian are often in juxtaposition of, and superseding the normal temporal concerns of those yet in darkness without the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What motivates us can be out of a desire to remedy the daily practical needs and concerns of our fellow man, yet, if this is done without the primary concern of the administration of the Gospel to address the eternal lost condition of fallen man, the works will simply be Christian in name only, having perhaps many good deeds and works, but without the true inner life of the Holy Spirit that transforms the believer from the inside, and motivates the love and forgiveness that is the lasting fruit that Jesus said His disciples were to produce.

Therefore in issues involving gifts of the Holy Spirit and the operation of those gifts within the body of Christ, the concern should probably be less on questions of what and how, and more on why.

The foundation of Christ on which we are to build our new born again lives, having left our old one by faith crucified on the cross with Christ, is a foundation rooted in eternity, it is the eternal city, the heavenly Jerusalem, whose builder and foundation is God Himself.

This is not a temporal corporation, business, religious club or association, but rather the body of Christ are people who are united in heart and mind by having their orientation and center of who they are based on Christ Himself. The focus is not on the temporal external things that are perishing, but on the unseen eternal things. The focus is not on the clay vessel, but on the treasure in the clay vessel, the revelation by the indwelling Holy Spirit of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

The believer in Christ will never reach a point in their walk where they will not need to exercise and maintain a steadfast faith in the truth of the Gospel. There will never come a point where the operation of Christian faith will become automatic. It is something that needs to be exercised and maintained, something the believer in Christ is to work at remaining steadfast.

To that end, all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, all the administrations of the various talents and abilities of the members of the body of Christ are to be toward the goal of establishing and building up the stature of believers until they reach and maintain a maturity in their faith in Christ, and so they will not be drawn back to the weak and worthless elemental things of the this world, measuring man by himself, and trying once again to build on the old foundation that we were to once for all leave by faith crucified with Christ on the cross. We are not to see ourselves corporally and individually seated with Christ in the heavenlies at the right hand of the Father.

To the extent that the professing church misses that focus and orientation on the risen and eternal Christ, and instead becomes exclusively focused and preoccupied with the daily temporal concerns of what they shall eat or what they

shall wear, that the church then misses its calling to seek first the true kingdom of God, and is instead once again engaged in the business of man seeking to build his or her own kingdom.

Man's goal therefore, should not be to try to spend eternity in the temporal, but instead, to express those hopes and convictions of their treasures in heaven, while engaged in working out God's plan for each individual member of His body while there are yet those still destined to perish without light of the knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are not to forbid, the Bible teaches, to speak in tongues. We are not to despise prophecies. But we are to test every spirit against the event of anything rising above the knowledge of Christ, and seeking to draw attention away from Him to itself.

All gifts and callings truly exercised in God and in dependence of God's empowerment will for the purpose of drawing the body of Christ together onto the foundation of Christ, with Christ as the head of the church, and the members individually and corporately identifying and reaffirming themselves and each other with the knowledge of the who they are in Christ, and by faith standing before God clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not to be the focus of the church, the gifts are to help the church focus on Christ.

When the Saints are Fully Equipped

Ephesians 4:11-16

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

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

When Paul speaks of having weapons of warfare that are not carnal, but are used to cast down everything that seeks to exalt itself against the knowledge of God in Christ, he is not speaking of a physical tool or device, rather he is talking about location of the real arena of battle in which the Christian believer needs to be engaged in order to be victorious in the life of Christ.

Many people engaged in battling the symptoms of carnal thinking, suppose that when Paul speaks about things rising above the knowledge of Christ, that he is

referring to thoughts of lust or covetousness, or jealousy and un-forgiveness. But in reality, a deeper examination of the principles of spirituality in the New Testament reveal that these conditions are actually symptoms of the root cause of the failure of the believer to understand and maintain their position, by faith, in Christ.

Romans 8:5-9

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

When the flesh is seeking and putting demands on soul and spirit that it be appeased, and when soul and spirit are in a subordinate relationship to the flesh, they must be always seeking to pay the debt of the flesh. For those who are carnally minded considers the state of the flesh, the external temporal clay vessel inherited from and subject to the fall of the first Adam, and depend and rely on the flesh as the foundation of self identity.

Galatians 3:3

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Romans 8:12-13

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors — not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

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.

Colossians 2:20-23

Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations — “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which all concern things which perish with the using — according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

The Bible says that if by the spirit we are putting to death the deeds of the flesh, the believer will live. All too often, external superficial religion based on the elemental principles of this world engage the believer in struggles against the flesh, and yet leave the believer in a carnal state of mind in that the flesh still is the predominant consideration. And whether it be a concern of seeking to fulfill the appetites and lusts of the flesh, or seeking to subdue it by religious laws or severe treatment of the body, yet the flesh remains the focus, it continues to be the believers foundation rather than Christ.

True victory from sin the life of a Christian believer is not achieved by directly focusing on the flesh and attempting to perfect it. True victory is to put to

death the deeds of the flesh by no longer making it the focus and foundation of the believer. Indeed, the Bible speaks of the flesh as something the believer is to leave, by faith, on the very cross of Christ Himself.

Colossians 2:11-15

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

Romans 6:1-14

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

The Bible speaks of a new birth and a transformation, where the laws of God are no longer written on stone tablets, but on the heart, not in a legalistic sense, but in the sense that the heart, responding to God's love and forgiveness, seeks at all times to please God not as payment for salvation, but as a response to the gift of salvation in Christ.

2 Peter 1:1-4

Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

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.

John 6:39-40

This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

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[a] 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.

Therefore true effective living in the spirit of life in Christ Jesus always begins in faith in the Son of God who loved us and delivered Himself up for us, who now allows us to partake of Christ's divine nature though believing and

trusting in the promises that God has made, so that we see ourselves no longer based upon the foundation of who we were prior to salvation, but now see ourselves in Christ, seated with Him, a joint heir to all that Christ is to inherit as a member of God's family.

Colossians 3:1-11

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

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

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

Paul warns those having begun in the spirit, not to seek to be perfected by the works of the flesh. for it is on the bases of an indestructible life, not the rituals of law and eternal appearances, but a true cleaning of the inside of the cup, that is the transformation of the believer in Christ that is the goal of Biblical New Testament instruction.

1 Timothy 1:3-7

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia — remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

If we would seek to really experience the Holy Spirit at work in the body of Christ, we need to be working in the same direction and with the same goals as the Holy Spirit.

That is the building up of the body of Christ on the foundation of Him, and into the complete stature of what it means to be in Christ, where all are complete in Him, in whom the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form, so that regardless of the gifts or the activities of the members within the body of Christ, they have all come to a unity of the faith in the bond of peace, where there is no longer external considerations of each member according to the classifications of the fallen world system, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for are all one in Christ Jesus.

To the end that we strive to be of one mind in Christ, and experientially as well as intellectually understand what it means to abide in Him, and be complete in Him resting in His finished work, and do all that we do not as an attempt to earn salvation but as a response to the treasures that the believer is given in Christ, to that end the effectual working of the Holy Spirit can be expected as He will be able to move as He pleases, in confirmation of the true administration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Having crusades and gatherings focuses on trying to provoke miracles out of the Holy Spirit fail and thus resort to being realized by the arm of the flesh simply because the work is not that of the administration and presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:32-35

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

We note that it was not a system of economics or socialism that produced the unity of the believers, rather the unity of the believers in Christ resulted in the evaluation of each of the members of the body of Christ by the value inherited from abiding in Christ, being clothed with Him, members of His body and joint heirs with Him.

When we speak of soul and spirit, we are simply referring to that which is not the sum total of our physical being, that which is not a byproduct or condition of the body's material parts.

There is a spark of divine life in mankind, there is something that is not a byproduct of the mechanics of materialism, but which transcends the physical and has a place and connection with eternity.

And in a sense, that the breath of God, as the Bible calls it, gives life, and as it is the spirit that gives life, and the flesh in the realm of eternity profits nothing, to

be connected with God, no longer in enmity with Him, and our minds and hearts reconciled to Him as a loving Father, will be essential for our continuance in His presence for eternity.

All of time exists before God in a single instance, unmeasured by the distance of events, for all live unto Him, and He knows the end from the beginning.

All too often, in their efforts to draw disciples after themselves, those seeking to be teachers of legalistic principles, attempts at improving or creating spirituality in man based on what he does, or on the bases of what they try to conceive in their own minds, the end result is sheep that are scattered in that they are not unified in Christ, for each is then seeking their own way, what will work for them, following those teachers that satisfy their itching ears.

Such was the fragmentation that Paul observed in the carnal church of the Corinthians, where factions and divisions were beginning to form around certain teachers as if to imply that those teachers were offering some teaching or insight that the others did not and which was vital to realizing a superior religious or spiritual condition by the believer. When in truth, after all the daily business of religion has been occupying our attention, it is the one who has received as a child the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and who maintain the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ, who sit at His feet even as Mary did, who in the end are able to achieve far more both in the realm of the spirit and in the realm of the practical outworking of the fruits of the spirit, because they do so motivated by their hearts, rather than their heads.

Growth and maturity in Christ, as taught in the New Testament, is not an endless process. There is a point of maturity that the body of Christ is to attain to. And while there is a daily need to be in Christian fellowship, to wash each other's feet of the dust of daily travel in this fallen world system, to continually pick up our cross to those things that would seek to entice us to trust in the temporal

elemental things of this world, yet the maturity of the believer consists in their understanding of who Christ is, and who they are in Him, and their steadfast refusal to be moved away from faith in His finished work. And that their relationship with God is based solely on their inclusion by faith within God's family through Christ.

To move and act in His authority, as His disciples in the work of the great commission, we must learn what it is to be clothed in His likeness, to operate not on the bases of our own assumed religious standing before God, but rather to be in complete faith and dependence, even in the consciousness of our own weakness, of who we are clothed in Christ standing before the throne of heaven. Knowing that He made Him, Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ, and therefore having the confidence that God hears the prayers of the righteous, those who have a righteousness not by the law, but by faith in the son of God, who loved us and delivered Himself up for us.

Galatians 2:17-21

“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

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

This requires one to be spiritually minded, rather than carnally minded, and to understand far more than in simply superficial religious terms, what the distinction between those conditions.

The mature believer has learned, through trial and the renewing of the mind by the word of Christ, to distinguish therefore between carnal and spiritual mindedness, between walking by the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and walking by the flesh, between building on the foundation of Christ with gold refined by fire, or continuing to build on the old foundation with wood, hay and stubble, the things which are perishing stored not in heaven, but in physical barns.

To have truly died to self is to build on the foundation of Christ, to rest in His finished work, to learn the secret of being content in all circumstances in the tribulations of this world knowing that our real life is hidden with Christ in God, and seated above all power and principality, He as overcome the world.

Hebrews 4:11-12

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

James 1:2-7

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;

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

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

Philippians 3:7-16

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

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.

Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

Luke 9:23-24

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.

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.

Reaching Maturity as a Child

There are many who know scriptures from the Bible, but there are sadly few who have heard and received the message of the Bible.

We should not pick out one scripture from the Bible and say this is what the Bible says. We need to read all of the scriptures, and then we will be able to understand what the Bible is saying at a particular place within the context of the whole.

Most people when they read the scriptures in the first chapter of James in asking for wisdom, and asking God for it, imagine they can ask God for the wisdom to get out of the trial they are currently going through. And if they had read the whole passage, they would realize that the wisdom that James is speaking of is the wisdom to understand how trials are useful for increasing our faith and dependency in the Lord.

It is exactly the same experience that Paul was referring to in 2 Corinthians 12, where Paul writes about how he came to learn that in conscious weakness was God's spiritual power perfected. It is at that place of both our own personal weakness, and our faith in being able to stand in Christ, and in His authority have access to the very throne of God, that we are then able to do all things, those things directed by the leading of the Holy Spirit for the fulfilling of the great commission, that of making disciples of Christ through all the nations and demonstrating the truth and power of the Gospel, through Christ.

For the most part, the natural mind approaches religion with the goal of becoming as God, a master in either control of God through obligating Him to respond to the payment of religious works, or as those who through seeking to know as God, would by their own understanding and operation of what they know, be to themselves by themselves the God whose fellowship and support were lost in the fall of the first Adam.

Yet the scriptures reveal that the Creator of man is looking to save that which was lost, His children, His creation. In reverence of God for who and what He is, at least in regards to mans state and position in creation, is the beginning of wisdom.

Religion is the business of man. Either man seeks by his actions to obligate God by putting him in debt to services rendered, or man seeks to control the same power and processes that God Himself is assumed to employ once we accept the caveat that both God and man exist within a larger context in which both can access or control the same elements. This of course denies the Biblical premise that God is Himself the author of the creation in which man, as a created being, lives and moves and has his being. It was the devils initial lie in the Garden of Eden to suggest equivalency between God and His creation.

And yet to be truly God as the Bible reveals Him, God is the source of all things, and before Him, there was nothing else. He does not operate within an environment that provides Him with capabilities to impose His will; rather, all things are made by Him, as He wills.

Jesus taught that answer to prayer comes as a result of the relationship of a child to its Father, not as a result of manipulation or coercion.

We cannot be in an intimate relationship if all we are willing to reveal to Him is our religious works, while hiding our true selves, that which is naked without the fig leaves of our works and external appearance, hoping that the light of God's presence will never illumine the true nature and character of what we seek to keep hidden deep within our earthen vessel.

And yet while we hang onto and cling to our association and identity with our fallen nature, we are unable to open our hands, letting go of what we once held as precious to our existence, and free them to grasp firmly the life that God is offering fallen man in His risen Son.

Behind all acts of pride, and our feelings of insecurity and fear, we act on what we feel our out best intentions, but it is through this fear that the devil is able to manipulate our decision making into actions that continue disunity and disruption of that kingdom that God seeks to build on the foundation of those who allow their nakedness to be clothed, in the righteous robes of Jesus Christ.

While we yet seek to cling to our identity of who we are built on the foundation of the first fallen Adam, all that we do in the name of God will still be done according to the proscribed agenda of the fallen nature, and protecting it. We will not be able to pick up our cross and follow Christ, with our eyes set firmly on Him and our faith and our inclusion within the body of Christ seated with Him in the heavens at the right hand of the Father, but rather we will be seeking to preserve and continue, in these earthly tents, always seeking to mitigate and forestall, the perishing of the outer man. We will not therefore be of those who in the last days, who overcome by the word of their testimony of Christ, and who do not love their physical temporal lives, even unto death.

When the Parts Come Together

Using our cultures frame of reference for what is considered spiritual, when one comes across passages in the New Testament that seem to describe the Christian walk of being continually lead supernaturally by the Holy Spirit, that condition, unless understood in the complete context of the New Testament, will seem to suggest that being spiritual is simply a matter of having supernatural capabilities and operating them in day to day situations. Aside from using Christian terminology it is functionally and often times structurally indistinguishable from the generic supernatural understanding and experience sought and taught by the non-Christian spiritual movements in society.

First and foremost, the Bible describes the Christian's relationship to the Holy Spirit as one where He is a helper and by which we are sealed when we come to true saving faith in Jesus Christ.

True confession and faith in Jesus Christ is not a merely a mental acknowledgment of Jesus as a great spiritual leader or teacher, or even intellectual consent to the proposition that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God.

Rather, it is the recognition that Jesus himself is the way, truth and the life, that no one comes to the Father but in Him and through Him, and on behalf of that each must personally by faith no longer seek to build on the old foundation inherited from the first Adam, but by faith, leaving behind both the good and the bad of our works on the cross of Christ, the believer begins to build a new life based on the foundation of Christ and His finished work.

Hebrews 4:10

For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

Jesus told His disciples that after He had ascended to the Father that the Holy Spirit would be sent to reveal the things of Jesus.

John 16:12-14

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”

The revelation of Jesus Christ is the treasure in the earthen vessel of the believer, that inner witness that allows us to call God our Father (Romans 8:15), and allows us to recognize the Glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). Our faith comes into play when we rely on and trust in Christ for who and what we are and will become, and no longer put confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3).

Romans 8:12-17

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

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.

Philippians 3:3

For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh

This is the bases for our faith and our growth, both individually and corporately in the body of Christ. To that end, the Holy Spirit works in the body, gifting as He wills the members of the body of Christ for the work of building the body of Christ up, so that all come to stability and steadfast faith on the rock of Christ, and their identity is now no longer based on the roles and social positions they once identified with in the world system, but instead now each is clothed in Christ, and seeks to see themselves and each other in Christ.

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

To the extent that the body of Christ is working together to achieve the unity of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus in the bond of peace and rest in the completeness and finished work of Christ, and cast down every thought that seeks to rise above the knowledge that Christ is now seated above every principality and power, that is Biblically were we can expect to see the most pronounced and authentic work of the Holy Spirit.

Simply seeking miracles for the sake of those miracles to make our daily lives easier will not put us on the path to realizing the full strength and power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is when we align ourselves with the purposes of God in the administration of the Gospel of Christ, in abiding in Christ and making disciples, and carrying the message of the Gospel to those who have yet to hear it, that we can find ourselves empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:29-30

Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”

Our goal is not the end of the tribulation in this world and achieving an eternal rest secure in the possession and dependence on the material things of this world. Our goal is not to somehow forestall the perishing of our outer clay vessel, this tent that Peter wrote we only temporarily inhabit. It was the mindset of the early church that to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord. The hope of the believer is fixed not on the things of this world, but on that day when we shall see Christ face to face, and be clothed in His likeness, this perishable putting on the imperishable.

Until we come to that place to where our faith is steadfast in Christ, and our anchor goes beyond the veil of this life, and we no longer look at the external, which continues to perish as part of this fallen world system, and instead focus on the unseen things which are eternal, that is the true work of faith, and experientially, because our treasures are in heaven, and we are complete in Christ, out of the abundance of our heart so we will speak and act as evidence.

The works we do on God's behalf are not to earn blessing, they are done on behalf and in reliance on the blessings received in Christ.

Becoming Complete in Christ

To grow in Christ, we must start as a child on the bases not of increasing our own spiritual gifts and powers, even as the former sorcerer Simon sought to do, but rather Christian faith is rest in, operation on behalf of, and identification with who Christ is, and on the bases of who He is, not just in mental agreement with doctrine about Him, so we do God's work and can legitimately operate in His authority.

To that end, reaching the full stature of who we are in Christ, that the Holy Spirit would work in the body of Christ to bring about that growth, this growth is really something that is achievable by all believers, not just those with theological degrees. While there are those who have great theological understanding of the teachings of the Bible, really only one thing is necessary. Fixing our eyes on Jesus, having a revelation of who He is and what He has done for us, and resting on the bases of His life, so we are to continue walking by faith in Him.

We all go through difficult times, but for some of us difficult times consist of simply enduring pain, but for others, who allow the work of spiritual discipline, it is a matter of surgery.

Moses spent 40 years in the wilderness until he came to the point where he no longer evaluated his capabilities and potential on himself, but simply in faith in God and reliance on His strength. The children of Israel spent 40 years in the desert, until those elements within the corporate body, which bases their expectations upon their own capabilities and not in faith in God, both in His power, and in His disposition to care for them based on His word. Such was the faith that Jesus spoke of that would be lacking in the last days shortly before His return.

Luke 18:7-9

And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

It is this faith that is not measured by results or ability, but instead is the rest and trust of the believer as a child of God, a joint heir with Christ in the household of a loving Father God.

Romans 8:31-39

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

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

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

Christian faith is in Christ, and in trust in an all powerful Creator that God loves His creation, and that all of the promises of God are yes in Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:20

For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

Abiding in Maturity

There is a place and position where we must stand firm in order to achieve and maintain maturity in Christ.

John 10:7

Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

If Jesus is the door, what does that mean concerning our past or present apart from abiding in Him?

Many of us have experienced the frustration of entering a room and forgetting what were our past motivations or reasons for doing so. For instance, in recent research it has been discovered that the actual act of passing through a door may cause a memory lapses, as our experience and memories are often associated within "event boundaries", and these separate episodes of activity relative to the context of where the event of that experience took place. This is why it can be difficult to recall a decision or activity that was made in a different room due to that experience being compartmentalized.

When we go through traumatic trials and tribulations in this life, and do not do so in faith with our eyes on eternity, these events can become set points in our life, and when the dots are connected, often times we try to continue in the direction and momentum based on the last set point.

To be truly mature in Christ and to be abiding in Him, is to always have Christ as the set point, both the alpha and omega, the bases, foundation and goal of our lives and our identity, the point from which we continue, and the star we are to follow.

Galatians 2:20

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

Before we can catch the next train, we have got to be at the right station. Before walking out the path that God has uniquely ordained for each of His children, they must begin at the correct starting point. Jesus told His disciples that unless they abided in Him, they could do nothing. It is a location as much of the condition of the heart and mind as it is a physical or spiritual location.

It took Moses forty years. At that moment, when he had finally come to the end of his expectation and reliance on himself, and believed that all of his own potential had been used up, it was then that God showed Moses a bush that was burning, but never consumed.

I can do all things wrote the Apostle Paul, through Christ who strengthens me.

Trials are not to knock us down, but rather are to knock down the idols, on which we might rely, rather than completely resting and abiding in Christ, and trusting in God's supplied strength to do the work He has called us to accomplish on behalf of His kingdom, the kingdom of His Son.

Colossians 1:13

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love

This is what Paul said God revealed to Him in his second letter to the Corinthians included in the New Testament, when it came to the revelation that in conscious weakness was God's spiritual power perfected.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

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

Reaching maturity in Christ does not mean that in this present life, while still living in the earthen vessel inherited from the first Adam, and which lives in dependence upon the creation that since the fall has been subjected to futility, that we will be absolved and exempt from trials and tribulations.

Reaching true maturity in Christ is being able to walk through those events, even as Peter walked on the stormy seas after fixing his eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, and leaving the boat of wood, hay and stubble on which his fellow disciples still depended, he walked on the stormy sea.

Reaching true maturity in Christ is being able to go through those events steadfast on the rock, with our anchor beyond the veil of the temporal things that are seen with our physical eyes and which are perishing, with the eyes of our faith focused on the unseen things, which are eternal. For the food that God offers us does not perish, it is eternal, it is true food. It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh profits nothing.

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.

Psalm 23:4-5

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over.*

What is the full stature of what it means to be in Christ that Paul speaks of in his letter to the Ephesians?

Ephesians 4:11-16

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

How do we get there, and when do we know we have graduated from the school of faith into full maturity in Christ?

Our mind needs to be continually renewed, and our fellowship needs to be with those who reinforce, and constantly remind us, not of who we are in regards to the world's evaluation of us, according to our earthly riches, our physical appearance, and our worldly success, but rather our Christian fellowship needs to be centered around the continual affirmation of who we are in Christ, seated with Him in the heavenlies, for there is to be no regard for economic stature, social stature, racial stature or even gender stature, for we are all to be one in Christ, clothed in Him. To that end we need our minds continually renewed, we need the dirt for feet which daily walk through this temporal fallen life washed clean that we may not be hindered and distracted from our focus on the author, perfecter and finisher of our faith, our treasure in heaven, Jesus Christ.

Paul said that he had not yet reached that point of perfection in Christ, but that there was a position to be in to be able to fully receive the upward call of God

in the face of Christ. And that position was leaving all on the cross, not just sins, not just bad habits and failures before the demands of a religious system of law, but even those things that a man might trust in, those things the world would consider a man's strength, his capabilities, those things of the arm of the flesh that a man might rely and trust in rather than trusting in the arm of the Lord.

It is when we can truly step out of the boat on which we are constantly trusting in and relying on to keep us afloat above the tossing wind and waves of the circumstances of this temporal existence in a fallen world and we can walk through them unmoved and unshaken in our faith in Christ and who we are and will be in Him, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author, finisher and perfecter of our faith, it is then we have reached true maturity in the Christian faith and we can walk and move in the awesome power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:7-14

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

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.

Mature Foundations

The fewer the external temporal reasons for those things that the gentiles seek and in which they would understandably rejoice, the greater the evidence of Biblical Faith.

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.

When true faith in Christ is in evidence, then does the non-believing world wonder and seek the reason for the hope evidenced in the believer.

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.

For there is no need to ask why those who are rich and in need of nothing in this present world are content and at peace.

Luke 12:13-21

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."

Luke 12:34

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

It is when Paul and Silas, after haven been beaten and imprisoned in the Philippian jail who at the midnight hour rejoice and give thanks to God that the question is asked, "what must I do to be saved?".

Acts 16:25-32

But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

It is the Christian believers goal to seek first the Kingdom of God, then to trust God as a Father, as the believer is identified in God's Son, Jesus, to supply those things that God already knows are the daily needs of the believer.

Matthew 6:32-34

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. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

We are not destroyed eternally for lack of temporal material goods. We are destroyed for a lack of knowledge and faith in the truth, just as truth is in Jesus.

Ephesians 4:21

if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus

Luke 12:15

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."

John 14:6

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

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption — that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.”

Colossians 2:4-10

Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

We are to become mature in our thinking, no longer tossed to and fro by the tribulations of this present life, having by faith an anchor that goes beyond the veil, our lives built on the unshakable foundation of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:11

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, where there are opportunities, or environments conducive to agenda of the carnal orientation of fallen man in realms such as religion, or politics and government, that provides opportunity for the flesh. It can begin to corrupt and draw those who are corrupt.

Like sharks that smell blood from an open wound in the water, the proud are drawn because there are prominent places where they can be seen and lord their authority over others (Luke 14:7-9). The covetous are drawn because there is great opportunity to amass wealth and possessions.

Matthew 24:12

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

These are the foundations that will be shaken (Hebrews 12:28).

Many followed Jesus hoping for a miracle, but those who received came with faith in Him.

Our growth and maturity in Christ progresses to the extent we have a revelation of who He is, and of our completeness when we rest by faith in His finished work.

When we come to Him seeking to secure the sand of our own foundations and to continue to build our own kingdom, we remain carnal and immature in our faith. We will also be weak in faith, legalistic, for we will still be concerned with what we do for God, rather than putting our faith and hope in what He has done for mankind in the finished work of Christ.

The foundation of the church, the body of Christ, is not to be based on buildings or institutions lead by powerful charismatic men. It is to be built on the foundation of Christ with Christ as the head, in confession and belief in the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Christ that by the spirit each member has received. Amen.

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