

# Faith and Works XLII

The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts

Col. 2:8

# Success

We should not be coming to church in order to be reminded of how we fail or succeed in measuring up to the standards the world has been using as a standard of measurement.

And many commercial religious establishments present their organizations as guaranteed programs for achieving the world's notion of success. Their bottom line is of course the including that the provision that God is obligated to reward those who support such ministries, and so the commercial religious programming one usually sees dominating the prime time slots are usually those most successful in convincing their viewers that their personal success is dependent on how successful they make the given organization.

The goal that all seek is success, and we are told that if God loves his people, then he will want them to be successful. But we have different ideas concerning success. The Bible speaks of those who are first in this life, who will be last in the next. The world says you are successful when there is an expensive car in your drive way. Are expensive cars in themselves bad? No. But are they good, is ones success dependant on owning one? Is an expensive car a treasure that will last into eternity?

While much is made of differing statistics, such as the divorce rate, between those in North America who define themselves as Evangelical or Christian, and those who do not, there is a statistic concerning those who recently succumbed to the temptation to buy goods with unsecured loans that banks were forced to offer in response to Government programs seeking to artificially advance the economic status of individuals who ordinarily would not qualify for loans and mortgages.

Many did so because they saw the opportunity to receive a loan that they ordinarily could not afford as a miraculous event, and a divine mandate based on the message of material prosperity that has been preached and which has replaced the Biblical

Gospel concerning the difference between those who seek the bread and the wine, and those who seek the loaves and fishes.

People are being told that God is in the business of helping us reach our potential, that there is a good, comfortable and prosperous life to be lived here and now, and that one only needs to know how God operates in order to make those things manifest within our own experience. With the right techniques of faith we are told, we too can stuff our barns and take our ease knowing that tomorrow will be like today, only more so.

And yet while many followed Jesus for the loaves and the fish, many more turned away when He began to talk about the true kingdom of God, those who would need to leave all that they possessed and had build on the old foundation, and through faith would begin to build anew with gold tested by fire on the foundation of Christ Himself, not looking at the external, the things the Bible says are passing away and one day to all be consumed by fire, but instead looking at the unseen, the eternal things, paying heed to that inner witness of light, that treasure in the earthen vessel given by the Holy Spirit of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Christ. We are to be looking unto Jesus to define who we are, taking our rest on treasure in heaven, not the false security that comes when external circumstances are favorable.

Jesus said He gave a peace that passes understanding by the natural mind. Peter said to always be ready to give a reason for the hope that is within those truly in the faith of the Gospel. The non believing world does not need to ask the reason for the transitory peace and contentment that comes when our barns are full, when we are rich and in need of nothing.

There is no secret to be learned from such contentment. There is also no power, for there is no cross where there is yet still marriage to the first husband, that natural order into which we are born from the fist Adam. Our marriage to the first husband can only legally be annulled when the fist husband has died, by faith crucified with

Christ on the cross, and a new birth, and new foundation of all that we are begins in Christ as our life.

We may seek our best life now, but it will still be passing away. He who seeks his lower life will lose it, he who seeks his higher life will find it. When we seek first His kingdom, life in His Son, all the other things that the world seeks and that God says that He knows we need will be then added.

**Matthew 16:26** For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

A preoccupation with our continuing efforts to build on the old foundation will lead us to focus more on how Jesus did what He did, then what He did.

We want to operate as He did often to prevent us coming to the place where we realize the problem is our root, our foundation, who we are by nature from the first Adam. God does not love us because we are great. We become of value because He loved us, the unlovely, while we were yet by nature children of wrath. Jesus said that the words He spoke concerning our need to partake of His life were to be lived. We need to change our point of reference, where we stand as we face God, ourselves, and the world. To be a disciple means to be a disciplined one, one who takes every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Who we are and what we have will be determined by what we allow God to give us as we make room for His gift by letting go of the things the world defines as essential to achieve success as the world measures it. There was no room at the inn, and so the greatest gift God could give was given in a stable. Have we take the axe to the root of the tree as John the Baptist preached we should do, even those who considered themselves righteous, rich and in need of nothing? Have we prepared the way of the Lord so that our hearts could receive and respond to Him?

Paul came to the place where he realized it was all worthless, the place where he no longer sought to build on the old foundation, but sought rather to be found clothed only with the what God was offering those who would gladly let go of all they possessed of value, those things esteemed valuable for success in the natural, and chose to rejoice and rest in by faith in the treasure that God had given all who believe as joint heirs in and with the risen Christ.

**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.

**Philippians 3:7-11** 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.

We are to let go of the lower and instead go outside the camp of the world's definition of success to seek the city whose builder and foundation is God.

Joshua's army never failed due to a lack of the provision that God had promised. They failed and could not stand before their enemies when they sought the provisions of the world rather than trusting in God. God is not a resource we can use for our purposes, rather, He is our source of all the things we need that will last for eternity. He is not helping us on our way by giving us truth so we can build our life with His help and knowledge. Rather, He is the way, the truth, and life. We can do nothing of eternal value, Jesus said to His disciples, unless we abide in Him.

**Luke 9:24** For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

**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.