

Faith and Works XLIX

The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts

Col. 2:8

Heart

Luke 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made (Rom. 10:8-13), for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34; Luke 6:45). While it is important that we believe in our heart, what our heart believes is of equally important. God does indeed, as it is popular to say, look on the heart, whereas man usually judges by the external actions. Yet God knows that our heart will be where we find have our treasure. God also testifies through the scriptures that the heart of man is deceitful and wicked, that we do not know what is at the deepest core of our intentions and motivations.

We like to say that having a good heart, according to the world's standard of what is a good heart, is what really matters. That may be so in that we rarely know the underlying motivations and thoughts of another person's actions or behavior. But having a good heart is not a substitution for a heart, a mind and a soul that love God as a response to receiving the Gospel.

All too often we think that if people are nice and friendly, they in general have a good heart. Yet the foundation for those actions, whether it be social conditioning, religious training, easy going personality type, or indeed a heart overflowing with gratitude and love for God an fellow man are serious issues.

A heart that truly loves God, not to earn God's love, but because of God's love, is a heart that knows both the need and has received the answer and solution that God offers all mankind in the Gospel of His Son, Jesus. But who of us can really know our heart? God is looking for those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth He desires truth in the inner most being. Light must be allowed to shine in those deep recesses where men hide their nakedness and sin.

John 3:16-21 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

The Samaritan women with whom Jesus spoke at the well had to acknowledge her need for forgiveness and redemption, then Jesus presented Himself to her as the Messiah, the anointed one who would save the world from its fallen sinful condition.

The modern churches in the highly developed nations has in large part become the Laodicean church of Revelations.

Revelations 3:14-21 “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ — and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked — I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”””

The modern church's witness to the world has become characterized by covetousness, sensuality and self centeredness. Then they seek God, it is to spend His benefits on behalf of their comfort and pleasures. They seek God for the same things that Jesus said the gentiles were seeking, the loaves and the fishes, without seeking first the bread and the wine, Jesus. It is the spirit that truly gives life, the flesh profits nothing in regard to eternity. Thus there is no ability for the modern church to call the world to repentance, to turn from their ways to seek God, for all are following the dictates of their own hearts for the same things. The salt has lost its saltiness (Matthew 5:13).

Jeremiah 7:24 Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward.

Ezekiel 33:31 So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain.

Man often uses religion to polish up the externals, to whitewash the sepulchers, yet the root of mans separation from God, the nature he has inherited from his forefather the first Adam, remains destined for death.

Matthew 23:27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.

The Gospel is not something we are to merely agree with and to which we give our mental assent (James 2:19). When believed in the heart, the Gospel is the power of God which results in the fruit of character and actions, humility, love and forgiveness in a believers life, those who are born again on the foundation of Christ, and who are building on that foundation with gold refined by fire.

Religion can insulate us from the experiential self knowledge of how deeply all are in need of the salvation God offers in Christ. Religion typically begins on the premise, the foundation of man himself, and assumes man can inherit eternal life by man's own external performance. Man will thus typically relate to God by doing things to gain God's favor, rather than receiving God' favor in Christ, and doing things on behalf of what they have received by God's grace.

When the world masquerades as our friend and comforter, our external senses can lull us into complacency concerning external things. When we are rich in this life and feel we are in need of nothing, we do not realize the need to take the axe to the root of the tree. Only those who have truly seen the true extent of their need for salvation, who thus hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God that He offers in Christ will gladly leave behind all that they built on the old foundation for the high calling of the upward call of God in Christ.

In His light we see light. It may not expose things we wish to see in ourselves, but it is necessary if we are to truly see Christ, the light of the world. We are to leave our pride, our works, our fig leaves, and cast all on the foundation of Christ, when we receive and recognize our need and thus can see the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Christ. And those who have been forgiven much, Jesus said, love much.

It is not just "bad" people that need what God is offering in the Gospel, for all have sinned and fallen short of the kingdom of God. We do not need to diagnose each man's ailments, those particular external manifestations of the same deep rooted sinful nature that all descendants of fallen Adam share. The wound is incurable by mans own efforts and remedies, and God offers all men the same mandatory and complete salvation.

Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”

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.”

God is not willing that any should perish, but all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God, and to continue to live and move and have our being in Him we must be born again in union with His Son. All must choose to let go and no longer build on the old foundation, the new wine is not for old wineskins. We must leave all that we build on and trusted in on the old foundation on the cross of Christ. This is the bases for true equality and unity in the true church, the body of Christ. The body of Christ are those who come together in His name, who are all one in Christ, each clothed and complete in Him.

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.

We are to be in the world, but no longer of it. We are not to be living and identifying ourselves by its standards and only seeking God for the same things the gentiles seek. When we are truly in Him, no longer wearing our old filthy rags, but in a renewed and sound mind with all our thoughts taken captive to the obedience to the knowledge of God in Christ, and clothed in His robes of righteousness, then we can speak in His name and authority.

Too often those new to the faith fall into doing things for God, rather than learning to rest in and grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Genuine love for the brethren can therefore grow old when it is no longer on the bases of mutual faith and complete dependency of who we are in Christ Jesus. There is no other foundation that can be laid, there is no other name but that of Jesus by which we are saved.

1 John 1:5-10 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

1 Peter 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.

1 John 2:1-17 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

I write to you, little children,
Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.
I write to you, fathers,
Because you have known Him who is from the beginning.
I write to you, young men,
Because you have overcome the wicked one.
I write to you, little children,
Because you have known the Father.
I have written to you, fathers,
Because you have known Him who is from the beginning.
I have written to you, young men,
Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you,
And you have overcome the wicked one.

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 13:35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”