

# Faith and Works XVII

*The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts*

Col. 2:8

# Light and Darkness

There is fear in darkness, but some have a greater fear of the light that would reveal that all the works trusted in are but rubbish and fall short of the Glory of God. For man by nature is in the business of doing for himself what God once did when man was in fellowship both spiritually and physically before that fall of Adam. Man believed the devil's lie that even though God said death would result from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, yet man believed he would live without connection or dependence on God because man could learn to be as God, able to know good and evil, life and death.

John 3:19 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.

When we seek to do those things that God intended to be finished in Christ, we are in darkness. We do not know over what we stumble, and so in darkness the enemy has power over us. It is only when we are translated into the kingdom of God's Son, and abide there, that we are translated out of the kingdom of darkness where the devil has power over us through the deceit of his lies and deception. In that darkness the blind often lead the blind, and they do not know over what they stumble.

Col. 1:12-13-14 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

It has been said that when a man decides to go on an ego trip, he usually ends up traveling alone. The Bible puts it this way: the mind set on the flesh is death, the mind set on the spirit (the spirit of life in Christ Jesus) is life and peace.

Unfortunately that is our predisposition from birth, our inheritance from our natural forefather, Adam. The book of Satan says that man shall be his own redeemer. And Satan will supply the doctrine of demons to provide the directions his followers will follow.

2 Cor. 11:13-14 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

But to travel out of that darkness requires the ability to receive the revelation of the Glory of God in the face of Christ, some that flesh and blood cannot reveal to us, but which we will only be able to receive without offence if we have come to the place where we recognize that all our works are as filthy rags, and instead of hiding our shame or deluding ourselves with self-righteousness, we come into the light of the Gospel to receive God's salvation in Christ.

The process of emptying our hands so we can receive this great gift is often where we stumble, but His word is a light unto our feet.

Many times we think direction is about movement. Yet Jesus was under the direction of the Holy Spirit when He was led to spend 40 days in the wilderness. Moses was moving in the plan of God when he spent 40 years in the wilderness.

One of the most important journeys we can make is the path to where we come to the end of ourselves, and by faith, do all things through Christ (Phil. 4:13).

The devil moves men in the darkness through the ultimate fear of death, the loss of those things in which men trust and find their lives. He brings men to act on that fear by condemnation. He is called the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10). He is seen accusing Joshua the high priest before the throne of God:

Zech.3:1-3 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose

him. And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.

As all of our righteousness apart from Christ is as filthy rags, as long as our attention is on ourselves, and not Christ, this is an easy thing for him to do.

The devil came against Jesus in the wilderness by drawing attention to what Jesus lacked physically, and by trying to move Jesus's knowledge of who He was to be based on His circumstances. Then, seeking to guide the action he was hoping to produce, the devil sought to tempt Jesus to try to move men's hearts by the works of the flesh. Paul asks, having begun in the spirit, are you now being perfected in the flesh? Too often we succumb to the promised success of the worlds ways of moving men by the flesh, and trust more in our works than the Holy Spirit to move men with the Gospel. While men still have hope to improve themselves and trust in themselves and their works, the devil will be able to move men to false confidence in themselves and their works (Gal. 3:3).

To do this he seeks to dim the knowledge of both the Law and the Grace of God. For through the Law of God comes not the opportunity for perfecting man from the ruin of the fall, but rather, its purpose according to scripture, is to bring man's attention to the incurable condition he has inherited from Adam (Rom. 3:20), that by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified, for as always, there is a need for the sacrifice. Without the shedding of blood, even for the high priest of the temple, there is no remission of sin. The Law was to be our tutor to lead us to God's plan of salvation in Christ, should we have the courage to walk in God's light seeking His forgiveness.

Without a true knowledge of the need for the new birth, men will continue to build on the old foundation and follow the building plans, relying on the false doctrines that are not based on the new birth in Christ, but instead on man's confidence and

hope in his own potential. In such a state, even humility and repentance can be in pride if the underlying assumption is that we failed to achieve our own imagined potential rather than coming to the end of ourselves and abiding in Christ.

The Gospel message is a simple one. What is implied constitute the greatest fundamental changes to human character and spirit of any religion or philosophy.

to the women at the well (John 4:5-26) Jesus brings up the issue of the need for salvation. The women is confronted with His knowledge of her many husbands. At this point she could have become offended. She could have tried to justify herself. Perhaps she had an unfortunate childhood or other circumstances she could blame for her actions. Or she could have tried to draw attention from herself by gossiping about other folks in her village more deserving of condemnation than herself. This are the actions of those who when confronted with the light, retreat into darkness lest their deeds be exposed.

But instead she remains in the light of exposure, and now allows that what Jesus has reveled is the truth, and the conversation moves on to the issue of salvation, what one must do to be reconciled to God. Notice she is asking about the temple, where the sacrifices are to be made for sin, not about how she can perfect herself through religious works.

John 4:19-20 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

Salvation is of the Jews, Jesus says, for He had come to fulfill all that was written by Moses and the prophets, but the time has come that those who worship God must do so in spirit and truth. We are sinners, we need salvation. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleans us from all unrighteousness. He is the light of salvation. He is the way, the truth and the life. Will we merely give mental assent to the proposition that Jesus is the Son of

God, or will we gladly sell all that we have, leave behind all that we trusted for security and self esteem, for the treasure that God offers in His Son?

As a result of the women's honesty, she and her whole village are rewarded as Jesus tells them not about how to get into the Kingdom of God, but about the forgiveness, peace, joy and love of those who are abiding there as members of God's family through faith in Him.

Coming into God's light, the revelation of the Glory of God in the face of Christ, happens to those who hunger and thirst for God's forgiveness and righteousness, when the old foundation and all that was built on it, are seen as but rubbish compared to the riches and glory in Christ Jesus.

Jesus, if presented as merely a teacher of truth for those seeking how they may do the works of God, is no longer the Jesus of the Gospels who Himself is the Way, the Truth and the Life. True faith is not something we learn to operate. It is the evidence of what we truly believe, even despite our current circumstances, it is about where we have our ultimate hope and trust for all that we are to be, in Christ, the one true foundation for the city whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10).

To work in the authority of Christ is to trust not in our ability to learn to be like Him, but to abide in Him, trusting in His authority and power, so that we can do all things not just because of Him, but in Him.

At the fall we read that the eyes of those who fell were opened. They would no longer see with God's light (Psalm 36:9). Their understanding would come from their own knowledge. In that they became like their new father, he who was responsible for leading them to their current orphaned state. The truth was not in them, because they now relied on their own truth, they spoke out of their own nature. And rather than coming to Christ who is the truth, we are in the natural state always seeking knowledge to aid us in gaining control over ourselves and our environment.

John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

And so we continue to try to build on the old foundation. And eventually, the storms wash the sand away, the wood, hay and stubble are burnt, and we enter eternity at enmity to God, the one in whom all things hold together. As time ceases outside of God's created order, the result of everything coming apart, nothing holding to the center, that is the eternal fire that burns in the darkness apart from God's light.

And this outer darkness is man's destination by his own choosing when he seeks to establish his own righteousness rather than submit to the righteousness of God which is by faith in the revelation of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Rom. 10:3-4 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

John 3:19 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.

We naturally seek to cloth ourselves with our own works, our fig leaves. We seek to impress our peers with an external edifice that seems strong and pure, but it hides the fallen man within. The vacuum left by our separation from fellowship with God is replaced by the spirit of man seeking solace and comfort in dependence on the soul living in the flesh. It is the spirit that must give life as it is connected to the spirit of God, but apart from Him, our life is sought in the things we possess, the praise or condemnation from those around us, and our confidence is

in winning battles of pride and ego with those around us. It is the mind set on the flesh, seeking to improve it to earn eternity that produces works such as covetousness, pride, and the inevitable gossip as we measure ourselves by ourselves and seek to prove our works superior to those around us. This is our defence from the fear of the darkness we are in, a darkness few have the courage to look at in the inner man, while choosing to focus instead on the external temporal things of this present life.

Cain slew Able because his brothers deeds were more acceptable to God than his own. Who is better, who is best, how can we achieve success, remake our physical appearance, change our mental capacity, master some technique or art that would win us favour and praise amongst men, and allow us to sit at the seats of prominence at the feasts, all these are the preoccupation's and concerns of those building on the old foundation, married to the first husband. And part of the fear of darkness is the inner knowing that death is certain, and then comes judgement. By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

So for man to continue and be rejoined in fellowship with God, for his spirit to become a conduit of eternal life as it is once again connected to God, there must be a way for man to pass through death, not avoid it, and to have his nature once again of God and not of wrath toward Him.

It could only be done when man allows all from Adam to die, all the supports, all the foundation, all the walls to come down, and for man to stand in God's light, allowing God to cloth him anew, to provide a new foundation, a new covering, a new nature, that of Christ. And as we are joined to Christ, and Christ is joined to God, so all will be restored in God's kingdom so that He may be all in all.

It takes takes courage and trust to leave a place of security for a place where we are no longer in control. Yet our illusion of control was over a kingdom that was destined to perish. Yet many seek the power of faith and the supernatural to keep the natural from the death that God promised would result for the natural man

seeking to sustain himself through his own knowledge apart from dependence on God and a connection to His life and nature. Even so, in Him we live and move and have our being. Yet as children of wrath, hostile and seeking to hide our inferior works from His light, it is we who turn away to darkness unable to endure the Holiness of His presence.

The ones with the stronger walls are the ones least likely to start building anew. The cost is everything they trust in, all they have built on the old foundation. Some of the walls look quite good from the outside. Walls of religious and social prestige and influence. Yet built on sand. And inside, the death inherited from Adam.

As long as we confuse our own thoughts with God's we will have no problem following what sounds good, that which is in agreement with our natural predisposition to consider things from the standpoint of their utility to our quest for the knowledge to do for ourselves what God intended to be completed in His Son.

When we see the storm coming and we know the truth is not in us, then we can make a decision, seek a legal divorce by death from the first husband by leaving it crucified with Christ on the cross, and begin to build with gold refined by fire on the new foundation, Christ Himself. Heaven's streets will be paved with such gold. It is the result of all the impurities being burned away. Do we recognize that all we trusted in is as rubbish, as Paul writes, and that we are to find our completeness and treasure in Christ?

Phil. 3:7-9 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.

Believing in Christ, having personal Biblical faith in Him, requires we also come to an understanding of ourselves and our works:

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."

Rom. 3:19-20 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

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.

The yeast of the Pharisees is to water down the Law of God, the standard of His holiness, or to invent other laws, by which men would seek to do the works of God, and thus earn for themselves eternal life. But when our works are done in God, those who are pure of heart will see their need for a saviour. For some, Jesus

is a helper, a source for advice, or a model for behaviour, someone to coach us along so with His help or advice we can make it to the top of the mountain. Yet we are dragging a corpse, the first husband, that which God said would die when man stepped away from God seeking to sustain themselves by their own efforts and knowledge.

John 18:9-14 Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

It is coming to the end of the process started at the fall, and recognizing our complete need for the salvation that God offers in Christ that enables us to sell all that we have to purchase the hidden treasure, the unseen eternal things revealed by the Spirit that are in Christ. We are not to try to complete ourselves, we are to be complete in Him (Col. 2:10).

Gal. 3:2-3 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?

If we are complete in Him, we will not be relying on the works of the flesh trying to implement the weak and worthless elementary principles of this world. All the gifts of the Spirit working through a local body of believers in Christ are for the

building up of the community of faith until they have renewed their minds concerning who they are in Christ apart from the world's natural distinctions according to external appearances and circumstances.

Col. 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.

Gal. 2:26-28 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 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.

While many today recognize the error of those who seek to fight against sins, in that week after week they bring up one issue after another focusing on improving their performance and habits, few recognize that the other side of the same coin is the contemporary trends to seek to better ourselves by following one teaching after another which promises that we can improve our lives by changing how we act or think. While there is some wisdom in this, as a man thinks, so is he, this is not the radical transformation from the old wine skins to the new the the Bible offers in Christ who is not one of many ways, but the one way to connect fallen mankind to the Creator.

It is so ingrained in our natural thinking that we approach all matters as a means of learning the correct technique to successfully operate them, to be in control of our becoming more spiritual to the end that we over ride the effects of the fall. Faith is usually thus taught as a way to get the things the gentiles seek, rather than an

anchor that goes beyond the veil. And so the difference is that were as Paul could say he counted all things as rubbish compared to the upward call of God in Christ, religious seekers of today are usually seeking a faith that will increase and improve their rubbish.

While the Bible advises all those who would take up the offer of new life in Christ to count the cost, which will be replacing the old foundation, all that supported who we are, and beginning to build on Christ as the foundation, most religious teaching today concerns how to take good advice from the teachings of the Bible to improve the building on the old foundation.

For while the Bible declares that the Law, with the sacrificial system, was intended to lead man to a knowledge of his need for salvation, for those who refuse to come into the exposure of that truth, the true law must be abandoned, and others more compatible with mans capabilities sought instead.

The carnality and natural thinking in the religious communities of today are none the less based on man's reason even as the global trend to anti thought, and even fascism, is taking hold. Anti reason is none the less mans rational decision to subjugate all reason to the higher principle of man's subjective experience, feelings and intuitions. Yet this still leaves man centered in himself, non the less carnal for all the avoidance of rational thinking as indeed man's thoughts are now ordered by the logic of a man made philosophy, and the same fruit and works of the flesh are now no longer evaluated by the light of scripture, but are redefined in many cases as evidence of spirituality, the more irrational the behaviour the better.

This is how religious communities seeking authentic experience to validate themselves end up with people barking like dogs, speaking of the dreams and visions they have caused to come from their own hearts and imaginations, and all of this is now considered spiritual precisely because a rational evaluation based on a plain contextual understanding of the scriptures would condemn it. Anything, therefore that is the result of the sort of proposition that says "A is not non A" is

seen as evil in defence of submitting all to man's subjective experience. A is non A in the melding of the new spirituality and post reason culture.

The superman of the philosophers of the last two centuries was simply the formal methodology and justification for the ego of man to become unbounded in its attempt to attain the god-hood it first was persuaded to seek at the fall. Failing to match or supersede divinity, man then sought to exclude God and create a world view with mans will at the center. And as all of the natural order bears the mark of the craftsman who created it, so even the natural order and its relationships is attacked and seen as an enemy of man's ascendancy above his environment. Based on man, we have seen over and over, what is right and what is wrong always degenerates from eternal self evident absolutes based on direct and indirect revelation from God, that that of mere pragmatism, that which is true because it serves a purpose. The purpose that is always at the end of the trail man takes apart from god into the night, is to huddle together in groups based on truths that reinforce the groups preeminence over the individual.

While in the past the mind of the individual set on the flesh, whether in negative terms or positive, inevitably produced works contrary to those of the spirit of life in Christ, yet today we see the prospect of a global collective movement centered on the self that will surely reap a harvest in global politics and religion, as indeed it has done so in the past where it influenced whole nations and societies, yet was resisted as it was not yet a universal condition.

Those concerned with the Biblical faith once delivered to the saints by the Holy Spirit through the writings of the Apostles often decry the attempts of the modern church to become relevant to the modern culture by offering them an environment and teaching with which they can remain comfortable. It is true that these churches are failing to reach their potential within the role of a Christian community based on and abiding in Christ. But we are missing the point of what is really going on here. These churches are actually quite successful giving to those included in their social group exactly what they are seeking.

For one of the by products of man's failure to sustain himself by his works apart from God and the fear experienced of those in darkness, is to seek participation and acceptance in a group or cause. Membership is based on acceptance of laws, attitudes or beliefs. The individual is not accepted by their own merits, thus relieving them of the burden of personal responsibility, but by the merit they derive from the group in which they are included. This can give conditional superficial acceptance, but to reinforce the group, inevitably there must be a non group singled out and distinguished by its inferior qualities.

The more insecure the individual, the more they will seek to be assured that the meaning and purpose they need is supported by the group they have joined, the stronger will be the enmity towards those who are non members. While circus churches may seem harmless, they are really another illustration of where the culture is showing the lack of individuality and character necessary for a free society in that rather than truth, inclusion for the sake of belonging to a group is the goal. In a sense, the threat of truth existing outside that defined by what is necessary for inclusion in the group is feared as it threatens the validity of the individuals surrender of personal responsibility.

Saving souls, with the resultant fruit that enriches the earth with the salt of those whose treasure is in heaven, is not as popular as being relevant according to the works of the new social order which is being based on the individual finding meaning through his or her relevance to the current collective cause, whatever that might be ("we are the world").

This shift within religious communities to supporting the individual in finding security in the group itself, rather than being in fellowship with those who have and encourage each other in true faith in the Word of God, Christ, will soon turn into one of the strongest antagonists of those who hold to a true Biblical worldview.

True unity for Christians is based on being found in Christ, clothed with Him. But to put on Christ, one must count the cost, and put off the old nature rather than continue for a way to enable and improve it. In Christ, we are validated by Him, and members through Him of one another.

John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Isa. 9:1-2 In Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

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.