

Faith and Works XXII

The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts

Col. 2:8

Deeds and Fruit

The spite wants to live in Christ, to be clothed with Christ, with Christ the foundation of what is then built on the rock.

But centered on the flesh, the spirit is subject to the flesh fulfilling its desires to be satisfied and to convince itself it has by its own works and wisdom overcome the effects of the fall, which is death and the futility that creation was subjected to as a consequence.

Some faith teachings are no more than what Jimmy Cricket proclaims, when you wish upon a star, and it may be a star called Jesus, or something else, if you believe in your wish, it will come true. Some faith teachings may include Jesus as a catalyst or aid, and some may say your wishes must be found as a verse or sentence from the Bible, but following this path you do not arrive at the destination the Bible would lead you to, instead, you arrive at the same starting point that the world is at when someone like Jimmy Cricket tells them it is up to your faith, how hard you believe. But faith is not something you measure, for a mere mustard seed would, as Jesus taught, move a mountain. A child can usually do it better than an adult.

One might think Jesus has enabled the process to work, some might say He has demonstrated how to work it, but it is still a process, something we do, some better than others. It is still the same work left for the individual to accomplish, the same for both "faith" Christians, and "faith" people who are not professing Christians typically following a similar secular Gnostic doctrine of mind over matter, such as Scientology or teachings such as are found in books such as the now popular "The Secret".

The end result is what you can do. The gospel is not good news, it is good rules.

So whether the process is a sanctified "faith" system, or just mental affirmation of the positive thinking Gnostic New Age spirituality movements, the foundation, the

starting point is not Christ, it is the self, not crucified, but very much alive, by a twisted understanding of the Gospel, which leaves Jesus paying for man's sins, and man then going back to finding a way to perfect himself in the flesh. The mind is thus set on the flesh and on is a debtor to its success or failure.

The flesh dwells on its need to feel satisfied, full, rich and in need of nothing, to cloth itself in its own opinions and if possible, seeks to have those opinions confirmed by the praise of men rather than God.

So man seeks to have his flesh perfect itself into a non-fallen state. The old man is trying to be sanctified rather than left on the cross of Christ where the Bible tells us we are to recon ourselves by faith crucified with Him, so our souls can find new life though the Spirit resting by faith in the finished work of Christ and bearing the fruits, in love and forgiveness to others, that we are experiencing from God by His grace through Christ.

The world's variation of the true Gospel, propagated by emissaries of Satan coming as false representatives of Christ, present part truth from the Bible mixed with the yeast of the Pharisees. It is building on sand not rock. It is seeking a kingdom here through the elementary things and principles of this world rather than finding completeness by faith in Christ Himself.

And to ensure the principles will work for us, legalism is always added. Thus deeds become fruit and fruit become deeds, the reverse of what the Bible teaches.

Rom. 6:6-11 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.

If the body of sin is not done away with, we are still slaves of sin, and any law we try to follow to perfect the flesh will fail due to the weakness of the flesh (Rom. 8:3).

Humanism begins with the foundation principle that what exists is truth, what is, is. And so those always seeking another door to eternal perfection other than Christ always suppose that mankind can redeem and remake himself from the corruption of the fall by some new knowledge that will supply the directives by which man will perfect himself and redeem creation.

This trend of Humanism was somewhat mitigated by those who recognized that man within himself contained his own worst enemy. Some writers tried to counter the trend of human utopianism, the idea of philosophers such as Rousseau who wrote that if we just let a child have his or her natural way, that they would develop as nature intended. The book "The Lord of the Flies" showed how when man reverts to his natural tendencies, the weak rules of civilized culture that normally operate by a base moral consensus, that assumed by tradition, but lacking the inner conviction held by those who wrote the constitution of the United States, religious faith, these lacking a solid foundation a quickly set aside and are replaced by the base instincts of self preservation, pride and ego that are common to all men (Rom. 3:10). When basic needs and comfort are not longer met and the rule of law is no longer enforced by the government authorities, individual savagery results.

Often the writers of the popular television series the "Twilight Zone" would try to demonstrate the moral truth that mans inner nature, if left to itself, never gets what it really wants when it is unchecked in its desires.

Rom. 7:24. Paul, like all who would come out from behind their fig leaves, was confronted with a revelation of what the white sepulchre of his works in the flesh contained.

Eph. 2:3 Paul points out that we are by nature children of wrath. When we come to the knowledge that we need a savior not just to show us "a" way to God (Acts 16:17), but to deliver us from ourselves, then we are in a position to receive the true Gospel (Rom. 7:29).

Being born again in Christ is symbolized in traditional Christian baptism.

The contemporary mindset sees baptism all too often as just a washing or renewal of the old nature, then proceeds to teachings about what one must do, not that they are enabled, to be saved.

But traditional baptism, showed the death of the old nature, the immersion in water was to symbolize the grave, death. The old self was not to come back out, but a new self, in 'Christ, was to come out when resurrection, being clothed by faith in Christ, was symbolized when the believer came out of the water.

This is a fundamental component of true Christian faith. Not just that we can be forgiven and have a new chance to perfect ourselves with a little extra help from God, but that our old life is no longer our foundation for who we are, and we are now to focus our attention on Christ in whom we are by faith to abide (Rom. 6:6; Col. 3:1).

But all too often, following our natural thinking, and the commercial religion propagated through the media to appeal to itching ears, we transgress as we seek to rebuild what we should have, as symbolized in the act of baptism, destroyed (Gal. 2:18), and left behind as worthless on the cross of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11; Phil. 3:12-14).

And so walking in the Spirit of Christ is not about following our own intuition or what feels right for ourselves, having a inner conversation with our own alter ego.

In fact, our heart can be deceived and we are all too easily self deluded or incomplete in the knowledge of Christ, to whom we are to take all our thoughts captive.

Paul, in Romans chapter 14, speaks about believers in Christ who are yet weak in faith, whose conscience still condemns them according to their previous religious traditions.

We are to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, not just try to control them in general. The first religious question the natural mind will ask is "what must I do to be saved". And it is at this point if we do not hear the unique message of the Gospel, we can be led astray and mistakenly follow endless teachings that may contain truths, but never lead to the truth, which is Christ, the way, the truth, and the life.

The natural mind, set on the flesh, approaches the Gospel on behalf of its debt to the flesh, seeking the things the gentiles seek, thinking it leaves by its possessions and the esteem of men. A typical train of thought following a pattern of individual scriptures laid out of the pattern and order of the context of the Gospel usually begins with the promise that if God is good and gives His children all things in Christ, and if the scriptures say He wants us to have life and that more abundantly, that must mean that God seeks to fill our natural lives with abundance, even reversing the effects of the fall on our natures. John 10:10 is then typically cited out of context to suggest that the devils business is to try to steal our wealth and health.

But when Jesus spoke of true life, that in Himself, He said it was more than food and clothing, and that the Gospel is about seeking our righteousness and life in

Him, that He is our treasure, and we are no longer to be trusting in and being a debtor to the flesh, the fallen nature inherited from the first Adam.

It is impossible to say no to ourselves when we are depending on ourselves for our salvation. The mind set on the flesh is death. Those who set their minds on the flesh as the foundation of their being will reap corruption This is the yeast of the Pharisees that Jesus warned about. This is way the power of sin is the law (1 Cor. 15:56).

And so we come to Galatians chapter 5 where Paul speaks of deeds of the flesh, and the fruit of the spirit. Fruit grows naturally from good soil. Jesus said unless we abide in Him we can do nothing. Deeds are the activity of falling man seeking to perfect Himself by his own efforts. When we do good things so that we will appear good, we are still on the foundation of our old nature, and on the last day, despite our good works, Jesus warns he will say to such that He never knew them. Fruit comes from those who have received forgiveness, who know the depth of God's love as He sent His only begotten Son to be the payment for our sins, and that in Him we might find eternal life and be in fellowship with Him.

Those who truly understand that the flesh is death, the spirit of life in Christ Jesus is life and peace, that He is our treasure and that we are complete in Him, those are the ones who can say, as Jesus instructed in the Lords prayer, "forgive us, as we forgive our debtors". As we have received, so we freely give. To the extent that we realize the height and depth of God's love for us in Christ, to the extend we come to the end of ourselves and cast all on Christ, that is when we can truly love, not to get, but to reflect what we have truly received by faith. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6).

Gal. 5:16-26 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are

not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

1 Corinthians 1:1-31 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in

the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

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."