

Faith and Works XXXV

The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts

Col. 2:8

Grief

There are some people who are grieving and carry the pain from the loss of a loved one. The Bible instructs us in Romans 12:15 to rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Sometimes we are afraid to let go of the pain and the anger, and we want to stay angry and hold on to the hurt, because it may be the only tangible thing we have left of our loved one, and we are afraid that if we let that go, we will have nothing left of our loved one, and it is at these times that we come to the bitter sweet truths of the Bible where it talks about the sacrifice of praise, where we choose to believe that there is something more than this life.

For those we have lost who did not in this life profess the Christian faith, the loss of a loved one can carry additional sadness. But there can be hope, for while we know that the Bible does indeed teach that no one come to the Father but through faith in Christ, there may have been an individual that was not particularly religious, they did not really feel qualified to darken the door of a church, and they had a very simple understanding of God.

And who knows if in that split second when they realize that their life is coming to a close, and all that they have done is quickly passing before their eyes, who knows if at that moment they may cry out to God and say, "be merciful to me, a sinner"?

While dying, crucified next to the Lord, the thief on the cross asked that Jesus remember him when Jesus came into His kingdom, and Jesus told him that very day the thief would be with Jesus in paradise.

Luke 23:39-43 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."

But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

Luke 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.”

The Gospel is not about feeling bad about sin and then trying harder. It is about feeling bad about being a sinner, and being born again, then living on behalf of who we are by faith in Christ, not who we are trying to make ourselves based on who we are apart from Christ either trying to imitate Him or trying to ask for His help in building on the old foundation.

The Bible tells us that we are not to grieve as those without knowledge, those in Christ recognize that it is better to be absent from the body and be present with the Lord. For while we are in this world, we are strangers and aliens, pilgrims, while we look for a city outside the camp where the crowds seek to find their own purpose, and their identify and their acceptance and approval from each other, but

instead we who would follow and abide in Christ are to go outside the camp to seek a city whose builder and foundation is God Himself.

2 Corinthians 5:1-7 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

This is the anchor we have that goes beyond the veil of this life into the next one. This is why we are not moved by the circumstances here, and can in Christ be content in all circumstances. This why Jesus can say to us:

John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

His kingdom is not of this world, and He has prepared a place for us, for there will be a new heavens and a new earth, and Christ will be all in all, and those of us who abide in Him, will be in that kingdom, for by faith we have been translated into His kingdom in Christ.

1 Peter 1:3-9 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

Revelation 21:1-7 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”
And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”

And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

John 16:22 Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

So let us have hope for loved ones who have passed on. While it is appointed unto men to die once, and then comes the judgment, yet it is not a matter of our works, but our sincere casting of ourselves on the Lord and His mercy that allows us to stand before God clothed in the righteousness of His Son.

And let us labor all the more in prayer and witness of the grace of God to those who in this life do not yet know of the Savior, for we know that God is not willing that any should perish, and has abundant grace and mercy for those who come to Him through the gift of His own precious Son, Christ Jesus. All who call upon the name of the Lord repenting of a life of dead works and seeking forgiveness and life in Christ Jesus will be saved. Amen.