**“Faith Apart From Works Is Dead”**

(by Jim Stauffer)

When James spoke these words in verse 26 of chapter 2 he was concluding his argument for brethren to actually help a brother in need. It is interesting to see how many of the principles Jesus taught are illustrated in the book of James. This particular discussion is reminiscent of Christ’s story of the Samaritan who helped the man who had been robbed and beaten and left on the side of the road (**Luke 10:25-37**).

James tells his readers it is of no profit to one in need if you acknowledge his need but fail to do anything about it (**James 2:14-17**)**.** He further illustrates this by saying Abraham was ***“justified by works”*** when he placed Isaac on an altar on Mt. Moriah as God commanded him to do. **Genesis 22:18** says it this way, “***and* *in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;* *because thou hast obeyed My voice.****”* This is the point where we learn the works James speaks of are not what some call meritorious works, but are indeed acts of obedience to the voice of God as heard in His recorded will.

Some will see a dilemma between the text in **James 2** and that of **Romans 4**.But when the passage inRomans speaks against salvation by works it speaks ofthe works of the Law of Moses. The argument profferedby Paul on that occasion is that Abraham’s faith wasreckoned unto him for righteousness before thecovenant of circumcision between God and him (**Romans 4:9-14**).Therefore, Paul says, the eternal principle Godhas established is that man receives the promise of God(salvation from sin), when he has faith in God. Jamesmerely explains to us that one who fails to obey thevoice of God is without faith. His faith is dead.

Therefore, when we read **Ephesians 2:8-9 “*for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory****,”* we understand the message of Paul. He is sayingthose who obey the voice of God (that is, have faith inHim) will be saved by grace.

No one I’ve encountered takes the position that a man can earn his salvation by merit. It took the death of Christ to atone for our sins and remove the sentence of death for every man. **2 Corinthians** **5:14-15 “*For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we* *thus judge, that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they that live should no longer* *live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes* *died and rose again****.”* Jesus was the only One who could be offered as a sacrifice without spot or blemish. **1 Peter 1:18-19 “*knowing that ye were redeemed, not with* *corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain* *manner of life handed down from your fathers; but* *with precious blood, as of a lamb without spot, even the* *blood of Christ****.”* He has redeemed us from our iniquity but His grace is only extended to the faithful, those who obey the voice of God as Moses spoke of Abraham. This is what the writer of Hebrews says of salvation: **Hebrews 5:8-9 “*though He was a Son, yet learned* *obedience by the things which He suffered; and* *having been made perfect, He became unto all them* *that obey Him the author of eternal salvation.”***

Let’s try one more example of faith in God. God told Joshua, **Joshua 6:2 “*And Jehovah said* *unto Joshua, ‘See, I have given into thy hand Jericho,* *and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor****.’”* This was spoken in past tense indicating God had already decided to give them the city. According to those who stand on the “faith only” concept of salvation, all Joshua and the people of Israel needed to do was wait for Him to deliver it. But when we read on we learn there was work (obedience to the voice of God) to be done. Joshua was told to have the men of war march around the city once each day for six days. Seven priests were to carry seven trumpets before the ark. On the seventh day the men of war were to march around the city seven times. Then the priests were to blow the trumpets and the people to give a mighty shout and the walls would then fall and allow them to take the city (**Joshua 6:3-5**). The walls fell because their faith led them to obey the voice of God. The same could be said for numerous incidents involving man obeying the voice of God. David was able to slay Goliath. Gideon was able to conquer the mighty Midianite army with 300 men. On and on the examples go of men of faith who followed the instructions of God out of reverence for His word.

Is it any different today? Jesus indicates the proper response to the gospel, **Mark 16:16 “*He that believeth* *and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth* *shall be condemned****.”* Will you obey the voice of the Lord? It is not difficult to understand.

The Man Who Wouldn’t Go Away

(by Ken Weliever)

*“On the day after Jesus’ death, it looked as if whatever small mark He left on the world would rapidly disappear. Instead, His impact on human history has been unparalleled.”* These are the opening words by John Ortberg in his book “Who is this Man?” This was a father’s day present from my daughter and son-in-law. It’s going to be a good one! Ortberg asserts that most people’s impact and influence on the world begin to decline as soon as they die. If they do leave a great legacy, they already had developed an enormous reputation. Jesus’ life and death was different.

On the Friday Jesus died His movement appeared to have failed. His followers were scattered. Scared. And shrouded in secret hiding places. As Ortberg put it, *“If there were a kind of ‘Most Likely to Posthumously Succeed’ award given on the day of death to history’s most influential people, Jesus would have come in dead last.”* Consider Friday’s list of failures. Jesus died broke. Homeless. And all alone. He never married and had no children. He never attended college.   He never wrote a book. He never commanded an army. He never succeeded in business. And He never was elected to public office. Jesus never did anything like political leaders do to ensure His legacy. There are no original paintings of Jesus. Or statues. Or busts. He personally never had anything named after Himself. In short, the day Jesus died He had never achieved any of the things that people associate with success. Greatness. And lasting fame. Yet, three days later things began to change. Quickly. Uniquely. And dramatically. Jesus arose from the grave! He overcame death. Defeated the devil. And resurrected hope in His dispirited disciples. There’s no denying it!   Witnesses confirm it. History records it. And changed lives demonstrate it.

His name and message began to be preached 50 days later.   First at Jerusalem. The in Judea. Samaria. And throughout the Roman empire. All kinds of people were converted. Men and women found equality in Christ. Jews and Gentiles were joined together as one. Masters and slaves became spiritual peers. Even Jesus’ most ardent enemy, Saul of Tarsus, turned from being a persecutor to a proclaimer of Jesus!

Today every facet of our lives is impacted by Jesus. Art. Literature. History. Poetry. Sculpture. Theater.  And even movies! His name has influenced the names of our hospitals. Towns. And missions. Libraries are filled with books about Him. Museums display artifacts relating to His era. The influence of the Son of Man is everywhere! The name of Jesus was “not so much written as ploughed into the history of this world,” once wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson.

In his sermon “The Real Jesus,” James Allen Francis said: *“Nineteen centuries have come and gone*, *And today Jesus is the central figure of the human race*, *And the leader of mankind’s progress*, *All the armies that have ever marched*, *All the navies that have ever sailed*, *All the parliaments that have ever sat*, *All the kings that ever reigned put together*, *Have not affected the life of mankind on earth, As powerfully as that one solitary life.”*

Still today through His Word and the preaching of His Gospel He is ever-present. Probing our souls. Touching our hearts. Calling to our consciences. And He is coming back again to receive the redeemed and take them back to His home in heaven. Indeed, He is the Man who won’t go away!