

Faith Works

My dad was a man's man. He taught hand-to-hand combat in WWII. He could work Superman into the ground. But the tenderness with which he honored my mom was his greatest sermon. At age 75, he kayaked the Grand Canyon for 261 miles and wrestled some of the most unforgiving white water on earth. But I never heard him say one negative word to my mom's face or when her back was turned. My dad's philosophy was simple, "Just work like it all depends on you and pray like it all depends on God, and between the two of you, you'll usually come out okay."

James would have liked my dad. In his New Testament letter, Jesus' half-brother said it this way, "Someone might well say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith without works and I'll show you my faith by works. Faith without works is useless." "Men of faith" who sit piously in church pews listening to sermon after sermon (or even behind the pulpit preaching those sermons) who continue in bitterness, pornography, extramarital sex, financial dishonesty or passiveness to the cries of the less fortunate have become the greatest enemy of the Christian faith! The cults and world religions requiring discipline, fear and reprisals rooted in falsehood attract millions of naive followers worldwide. It is a great misfortune that misunderstood grace and "lip service" faith are turning men away from the Christian church in droves.

My dear 83 year old friend, Dr. Horace Wood, used to aptly remark, "God loves you just the way you are, but He loves you too much to leave you like that." No doubt, when we are saved by grace alone, God sees you through "cross-colored glasses." Equally certain is God's principle that, "To whom much is given, much is required." Grace is to a believer what 2x4's are to a framer and soil is to an excavator. Faith is the stuff in which we deeply root ourselves, grit our teeth, set our mind on things above, and pour our hearts out into the pursuit of holiness. Faith motivates us to dedicate our talents, time and treasures to care for the needs of the spiritually, economically and physically less fortunate. Faith is a catalyst for action.

The story goes of the poor blind lad sitting on a stool at the busy train station selling pencils for a few coins to meet his daily needs. In the rush of the overcrowded corridor, a busy traveler carelessly runs into the lad, scattering pencils, the stool, and the boy sprawling across the concrete surface. Without missing a step the insensitive traveler rushes on haphazardly to catch his train.

Another gentleman sees the accident and lifts the kid to his feet. Embracing him and restoring him securely on his stool, the stranger devotes himself to picking up the pencils, scattered coins and places them neatly in their box. The man then reaches into his billfold and fills the money box to the brim.

The stunned lad reaches out to take the stranger's hand. "Mister, are you Jesus?"

"No," the man replies. "I'm just one of His followers."

The lad replies in astonishment, "I knew you had to be some kind of kin."

Mark these Key Words: **Lord** **Jesus** **Wisdom**

Old Testament Viewpoint

Proverbs 1:7, 29-31; Proverbs 2:6-7

Proverbs 1:7, 29-31 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

29 Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD. "They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices."

Proverbs 2:6-7 For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity.

New Testament Viewpoint

James 2:14-17; Romans 6:1-4,11; 1 John 2:3-6

James 2:14-17 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

Romans 6:1-4,11 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

1 John 2:3-6 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

OBSERVATION: What is God saying?

1) Describe the synergy of faith and works; of faith and obedience.

2) What does James mean when he says, "Faith without works is dead."

3) Why is a grace-filled heart a heart committed to obedience?

4) When do works become legalism?

5) When does grace become an excuse to sin?

6) How does Satan deceive a believer to continue to practice sin using the excuse, "God will forgive me, so it's ok."

7) God's commandments are designed to protect us and provide for us. How does obedience bring peace and fulfillment to a believer?

PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: *What else of significance do you see God saying in this passage?*

APPLICATION: *How does this passage relate to me today? What changes does it bring to my life?*

LOCKER ROOM: *How are you doing with your walk of grace and obedience?*

MEMORY VERSE: Psalms, 119:9
How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.

My Prayers

A

Adoration: Father, today I praise You for...

C

Confession: Father, please forgive me for...

T

Thanksgiving: Father, today I'm thankful for...

S

Supplication: Father, the people & things that I wish to pray for today are...