



# **VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY**

*Weekly Bible Study - 15:07:2009*

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## **STUDY 24: DIVINE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**

James 2:14-26

Christianity demands of its followers good works towards all people (Matthew 5:16, 16:27; Ephesians 2:10; I Timothy 6:18; II Timothy 3:17; Titus 1:16, 2:7, 14, 3:8). Although salvation is not obtained by works (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5) but after salvation, those saved (i.e. Christians) are required to prove the genuineness of their Christian experiences through their good works. Our study points to the danger of professing a faith which is empty of real content and devoid of its proper nature. Such so-called faith produces no fruit of practical compassion. James begins by referring to holding "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vs. 1), and ends with a sustained examination of what that faith means in practical terms (vs. 14-26). The life of faith is the life of active consecration. It must be expressed outwardly in the active obedience that holds nothing back from God, and reaches out to the helpless among humanity. Every act of obedience is an act of faith and works combined to maintain justification before God.

While it is undeniable that we are saved by faith alone (Ephesians 2:8), not everything that is claimed as faith is the genuine article; and not everyone who claims faith is a genuine believer.

### **PERDITION THROUGH FAITH WITHOUT WORKS**

James 2:14-17, 18-20; Ephesians 2:8-10; Matthew 22:1-14.

Faith is spurious when the claim to it is devoid of concern for men - even for the needs of those (i.e. brothers and sisters) within the Christian Fellowship (Galatians 6:10). We learn from this passage that faith exposes its true nature, for good or ill, by its reaction to human need. When Jesus said "go in peace", it was after the person's needs had been met (Luke 7:50, 8:48). If faith has no personal involvement in seeking practical solution, it is profitless (vs. 14), and dead (vs. 17). The general lesson is that it is not mere expression of faith which saves a man. The man in Matthew 22 had none of that fine linen which is the righteous deeds of the saints (Revelation 19:8). The only evidence of the reality of genuine faith is that it does something good (vs. 18). The fruitfulness of faith should be evidence through the works of peace and comfort on the recipients (Hebrews 11:31). On the other hand, the sort of "faith" the devil professes (i.e. intellectual faith) begets nothing but trembling at the certainty of the reality of God. Consequently, it is barren (vs. 20). False faith is faith which is merely an expression of opinion, a bare testimony, concerning which there is no visible fruit.

### **PERFECTION THROUGH FAITH AND WORKS**

James 2:21-26; Genesis 22; Joshua 2 & 6.

Genuine faith is exemplified in Abraham and illustrated on several occasions in the New Testament;

(1) Romans 4; Galatians 3:6; referring to absolute reliance on God's promises.

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- (2) Hebrews 11:8; referring to faith as obedience to a command backed by promises. It involved the taking of risks and the abandoning of securities.
- (3) James 2:21; Hebrews 11:17; referring to obedience to a command which seemed to contradict God's promises. What was the work of Abraham? It was that he held nothing back from God. God said, "I want your son" Abraham said "You can have him".

Consequently the principle of genuine faith (vs. 24) is that a man is justified by works and not by faith ALONE. Not that Abraham worked for his justification before God, but that the faith he professed for salvation was genuine and demonstrable by his works.

Fruitfulness of faith towards man can also be seen from the life of Rahab (vs. 25,26). Though James does not say anything about Rahab's testimony (which is recorded in Joshua 2:9-11), yet we know from scriptures what her testimony of faith led her to do - namely, to "receive the messengers". The evidence of out-going, sacrificial, self-forgetful concern for the welfare of others was seen in her.

In Conclusion, faith must be challenged. If, in the face of the challenge, it is victorious, then it makes progress towards becoming a fixed characteristic of life, and moves on to genuine maturity. We can neither escape this progression nor take short cuts in it.

Faith must meet and pass its tests. The 'works' are the obedient acts of faith in the face of the Word of God. Looking at the "works of faith" as exemplified in Abraham and Rahab, it is wonderful to note how the word of God brings these two together –

- (1) a man and a woman.
- (2) a Jew and a Gentile.
- (3) a man of great sanctity in his walk with God, and a woman of great uncleanness.

These show that works of faith are for all the people of God, and none can make acceptable excuse for not manifesting them.