

# SAVING FAITH

by Joel Morrison

“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (James 2:24).

The relationship of faith and works is a matter that is gravely misunderstood by multitudes in our world today. There are those who would have man saved by faith apart from works, and others who would have man saved by works apart from faith. But the Bible teaches that faith with works, or works by faith, is the kind of faith that saves.

The problem seems to be a matter of understanding what is meant by faith and works. If by works one means works of man's own merit, whereby God owes man salvation after he has performed so many “good deeds,” then certainly it is false that man can be saved by works. When one has sinned there is no amount of good that he can do to undo that wrong, nor to negate that sin before God. God alone can forgive and He does not weigh the good that one has done against the bad in order to determine one's innocence or guilt. One cannot earn nor merit salvation regardless of the good he may do in his lifetime. Salvation is a free gift of God that no amount of works can purchase (Rom. 6:23).

However, the Bible teaches that works are required of man in order that he might be saved. But the works authorized and demanded by the Bible are works, or acts, of obedience out of a heart of faith in God and His promises. When James stated that “by works a man is justified” he was speaking of those acts of obedience in doing what God has commanded. A person who merely believes in his heart, but does not obey the will of God does not have saving faith.

James declared that faith which does not obey is a faith that cannot lead to salvation. “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” (James 2:14, “can that faith save him,” ASV). A mental acknowledgement apart from acts of obedience will profit one nothing. Faith that does not obey is a faith that will not save. It must be pointed out that James is not saying that one is not saved by faith. He is saying that one is not saved by faith alone - faith apart from obedience.

Abraham is used as an example of one who was justified by works. Abraham's faith led him to obey God's command to offer Isaac upon the altar. His obedience was the works by which he was justified. Would anyone dare suggest that Abraham would have been justified had he refused to obey God? When was he justified? When his faith obeyed! “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” (James 2:21-23).

What kind of faith do you have? Is your faith a profitless, dead faith that will not save? Faith that saves is a faith that obeys. If your faith has not led you to obey God's commands, then you do not have saving faith. To receive forgiveness of sins one must believe that Jesus is the Christ (John 8:24; Mark 16:16), repent of sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2:38), confess faith in Christ (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10), and be buried with Christ in baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4). Obedience to these commands will result in the forgiveness of one's past sins, put him into Christ, add him to the church of Christ, and grant him membership in God's family. But faith must continue to obey God's will if one would be granted entrance into the eternal abode of the faithful (Rev. 2:10; James 2:14-17; 2 Tim. 4:6-8).

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). It can come in no other way. Read, study and meditate upon God's word in order that you might know God's will for you and then do what God has instructed in order that you might go to heaven when this life is over.