

## TRUE OR FALSE “FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD”

This has been and is a very important aspect of the true believers life in the Christian world that we live in today. There are many varying views on this topic. Unfortunately, for the true believer in Jesus this can get a little cloudy. There are many today that are telling us that faith alone in

God’s grace is the only thing that matters. We have seen that the word “love” has really been taken out of the believer’s language and it has been replaced by the term, “grace.”

However, there are no scriptures that plainly tell us that “God is grace.” No, the fact of the matter is that the only Word that God declares himself to be is “love.” The scriptures are very clear as they state that “God is love.” In 1John we see John, the Apostle whom Jesus truly loved, declare this aspect of God. We see John write concerning God’s love as he simply states that “*God is love*” in 1John 4:7, 10 and 12.

Actually all of 1John is written in a way that expresses the love that God is and has towards all His people. It is truly amazing to me that the letters of John are trying to be removed by many who call themselves experts in the Word of God. They relate to us that God is grace and not of love. Yet, I have not found in any of the scripture that declares outright that “God is grace.”

The scriptures are clear when they tell us that God bestows His grace upon those that believe in Him as well as upon all those who don’t truly believe in Him. Yes, grace is an attribute of God but the word that totally envelopes all that He truly is, is the word “love.” God’s love bestows His grace upon all people. It was His love that allowed His grace to be shed upon all people so that they would be able to see His mercy. God’s mercy was literally sending His son Jesus to take that cross. It is at this point where we see that anyone who then truly believes in what Jesus did on that cross and His resurrection will receive His total unconditional love and have new life in Christ.

They that truly believe in all that Jesus did are brought into true peace (a relationship now with the Father through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit) with God. This peace with God is referring to and literally is salvation, which then leads us to being able to truly love Him back. As we love on God, He then continues to pour out upon His true believers more of His love which means that they receive more of His grace. Receiving more of His grace means that they receive even more of His mercy which then leads His true believers into a deeper relationship of peace (relationship) with Him. The true believers then release even more of their love to Him in which He receives and the cycle continues. It will never end as long as we continue to love on Him.

Unfortunately, the movement we are seeing perpetrating the Body of Christ in today’s world is that God is only grace. Yes, God is grace – but He is much, much more. If we live in that vein of understanding than we are limiting what we truly have in and through what Jesus did for us on the cross and what He continues to do every day of our lives.

In the second chapter of James we read that, “*Faith without works is dead.*” Many in the “hyper-grace” movement believe that the Book of James needs to be removed from the Bible or they simply ignore it because of what James writes. They say that James is telling us that in order to have a relationship with God we must first be doing “good works.” What they are truly doing is ignoring what James is truly stating.

Let’s read James 2:14-20 – “*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, <sup>16</sup> And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? <sup>17</sup> Even so, faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. <sup>18</sup> Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. <sup>19</sup> Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. <sup>20</sup> But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*”

So what is James really saying? Is he stating that a person must do the works of the Kingdom in order to be saved? I don't think so. If we truly read what he is saying we notice that he is stating the opposite. James is writing that if an individual truly believes in and has faith in Jesus and all that He has done for them then their life will change. They will no longer be the same individual that they were. Their attitudes and thoughts, their lifestyle and ways will definitely change. They will change into a person who is and desires to be just like Jesus.

When Jesus walked this earth He brought a different lifestyle to us. He brought us the lifestyle of what God had intended for all us to live by. It was a lifestyle that we get a glimpse of as we see from the very beginning with Adam and Eve. It was a lifestyle of true holiness and purity. So much so that they did not need to wear any clothing because the "shekinah" glory of the Lord was their clothing.

As we know, unfortunately, they were enticed and they sinned. What happened when they were enticed and disobeyed God? They lost their spiritual garment and became bare and they both noticed it immediately. They tried to cover their nakedness but to no avail. They tried to hide from the God that they had true relationship with.

When confronted they blamed everyone and everything but themselves. In order to save them and their offspring that was yet to come, God in His infinite wisdom and love (yes, God is love) banished them from the Garden. What was the main reason that God had taken them out of the Garden and placed an angel at the entrance? It was to protect His creation from doing even further damage. He kept them from eating of the Tree of Life which, if they had done that, it would be over. There would be no way to bring man back into relationship with Him if they would have eaten from the Tree of Life.

No, instead He banished them from the Garden. He began the process of restoring the relationship. Yes, God established the restoration of their relationship back with Him which would come only through the precious blood of the final atoning blood sacrifice of the only spotless Lamb of God – Jesus.

Throughout the Old Testament we see God prophesying and declaring that salvation would come. He spoke through the many prophets of the Old Testament until finally it came. It came in the form of a baby born in Bethlehem. We all know that this was not an ordinary baby. No, this baby was God and man. He was born of a virgin but the seed was delivered to the woman through and by the Holy Spirit.

Yes salvation was now very, very near. Jesus walked this earth for thirty three years. The final three years was total ministry of letting people know that salvation was very, very near. He first needed to die on the cross. He then needed to go and take the punishment that was in place for all mankind. But, on the third day; yes, on that third day, Jesus rose again and became the first "born again man."

He went to the Father and presented Himself and brought the special sacrifices on the day which the Jewish people know as "Bikkurum" but we know as Resurrection Sunday. He paid the final sacrifice in which now there would no longer be any need for any other sacrifice. All the sacrifices needed for a true relationship with God were fulfilled and accomplished in and through Jesus. The sacrificial system of the Old Testament and of the Law was fulfilled never to be done any longer.

However, in doing this Jesus also showed us how we are now to live our lives as true believers in Him and as joint heirs to the Kingdom. We are now to live our lives according to the moral aspects as found in the Law. Not in bondage or in a ritualistic way. No, no, no. Rather we live out our lives understanding that this is the way a true child of God is to live. We are not all there yet, but we are to continually live our lives in blessings and being His child on this earth.

I say that we are to live our lives now as being His child on this earth. How does His child act? How does His child behave? Well, that is where we have the moral aspects of the Word of God which are revealed to us in the Old Testament such as, yes I am going to say it, the Ten Commandments and all the other aspects of the moral conduct as expressed and revealed to us in the Old Testament. It is expressed to us even in a greater way within all of the New Testament writings.

We are in the process of growing in our lives to be more and more like our joint heir – Jesus. Are we there yet? I don't think so. However, that does not matter. We are covered by His blood. Therefore God looks at each of us as His own. Yes we are His. Now, we need to act and behave as He does and as He is. Hmmmm.... That is where the trouble lies.

That is what James refers to when he states that *"faith without works is dead."* Nowhere does James state that we need to do any of the works to gain our salvation. James actually never mentions or says anything about that. That is not an issue for him. Rather, what he is stating is that now as God's child we are to now live the life of faith. What is that life or lifestyle of faith? That is where the problem lies.

You see there has entered a thinking within the Body of Christ that we no longer need anything that is written in the scriptures which tell us and teach how to live and behave now as a Child of God and a believer in Jesus. We are taught that the Old Testament is "done" and that most of the New Testament writings are incorrect or they are obsolete now to the true believer in Christ.

Hmmm... Is this why they say that there is no need to get married and that living together, unmarried, is okay? Is this why they say that getting an abortion is not that bad? Is this why they say that homosexual relationships are now acceptable in the Body of Christ? Is this why they say... and the list goes on.

However the most difficult to swallow is that they are telling us that there is no longer a need for repentance because everything was paid for. A person no longer needs to even think about sin or living a lifestyle that is outside of the Word of God. There is no need to repent because everything was covered by the blood of Jesus.

In one way this is not totally incorrect. Everything was covered by the blood of Jesus. Once we accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior and receive the power of the Holy Spirit, we have become children of the most High God. However, it doesn't end there. Now, we are to live as children of the most High God. How do we do that? Is it automatic? Now, is each of us living the perfect, sinless, holy life? If this was the case, why wouldn't we go immediately to Heaven and be with the Father and with Jesus?

The answer to these questions is simple. We are to now live as Christ's ambassadors to everyone we come in contact with upon this earth. We are to represent Jesus in whatever we do, wherever we go and to whom ever we come in contact with. But how are we to represent Jesus? That is what James is writing about.

James tells us very clearly that *"faith without works is dead."* If we say that we believe in and have Jesus as our Lord and Savior then His Holy Spirit now dwells within us. The Holy Spirit will then lead us into living and doing things that others would see and want to change their lives to.

Have you ever wondered why it seems so hard for people to come to Jesus? Well the simple answer is they do not see the need to. Many "so called believers" act, do and live the same type of lifestyle as the non-believer does. Therefore, what is the difference and why do the non-believers need to accept Jesus. This is saying a whole lot about the believers they are seeing more than the non-believers. They are not seeing a need to change. They are not really seeing a different lifestyle.

This seems to be a different story in many of the middle-eastern and eastern culture these days. People are coming to know the Lord in great numbers in these areas. There is a great move happening. Why? Because it is a real change of lifestyle and living that the non-believers are seeing and ultimately desiring. We know of people having visions of Jesus visiting them at night and revealing himself to them.

We don't hear much of that in our western lifestyle countries. Why? I believe because there is a true move to be different in these eastern cultures – different then the way people are and living their lives. It is a **REAL** move of God. They believe God and then they go and do the works of the Kingdom – knowing that they are taking their lives in their hands; knowing that they are open to being killed because of their new belief in Jesus. Here in the western culture we do not see that. We are too busy trying to change our faith in Jesus to be like the world instead of the other way around. Hmmm....

*“Faith without works is dead.”* As we read in James 2:14-15, *“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, <sup>16</sup> And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; **notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?**”* It is almost laughable and we would say that it is not what we would do. Oh no!!! This is exactly what western Christian culture that is being perpetrated in our world is today. It is immediately after this thought James writes that *“...faith without works is dead.”*

James completes this thought by stating in James 2:19-20, *“Thou believe that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. <sup>20</sup> But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”* He states that believing in God is wonderful but the devils in hell even know and believe that. That doesn't mean or make them “saved.” He implores his readers to know without a shadow of a doubt that faith, believing in Jesus as the only Lord and Savior, without doing the works of what your faith really and truly is, is actually non-existent – it is dead!!!

Please, realize what I am stating. I am not stating that doing “works” justifies us unto the Lord. That is not at all what I am stating. We must first believe in and accept Jesus for all that He did – Jesus came to earth, died on the cross and took the punishment for all our sins; He rose from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of the Father waiting to return and rule upon this earth for 1000 years during the millennium. It is our faith in Jesus and all that He did and will do is what truly “saves” the individual.

However, once we are saved it does not end there. Now, as His child and as His ambassadors we are to be an extension of Jesus' ministry here on this earth. We are to represent Him and all that He is through the power of the Holy Spirit that now dwells in each of His believers. We are justified to God by grace through our faith in Jesus. The natural result of that faith in Jesus that is now within the heart of an individual is the “works” that all can and should do in the power of the Holy Spirit for others to see. The works that follow salvation do not make us righteous before God. They simply flow from the believer's regenerated heart. When we have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, our lives should demonstrate that new life.

As mentioned, this is done through the power of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 7:23 tell us quite clearly that if a person does not truly believe and truly have faith in the saving grace of Jesus then they will surely hear Him say to them, *“I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.”* It is our faith in Jesus that saves us. However, it is also our faith in Jesus that should and must lead us in doing the “works” of the Kingdom of God that He demonstrated to all of us when He was upon this earth.

Yes, so we can see that the answer to our question is a most definite **“true.”** *“Faith without works is dead.”* Unfortunately, a deception has gripped the Body of Christ today. The truth is that if you have true faith in Jesus and in all that He has done and is doing than you will be going forth and being His extension to all you come in contact with. You should be telling the world about Jesus. You should be laying hands on the sick. Yes, you should be doing the “works of the Kingdom.”