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### Faith Without a Working Object is Dead

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## FAITH WITHOUT A WORKING OBJECT IS DEAD

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES  
NUMBER 19  
JAMES 2:17-18

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Little Rock, AR

JAMES 2:17-18 "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."

All production in the Christian life has been so designed by God that it depends on Bible doctrine stored in the mind and not on human wisdom and human ability. There is no soap salesmanship involved here, this is entirely a grace operation. No one can really love Christ just on his own ability. Lack of the knowledge of doctrine puts scar tissue on the soul and crowds out true love. Emptiness sets in and a vacuum in the soul is developed and one thereby fails to become a doer of the Word.

In this passage before us, James is going to emphasize operational death. Now please remember this. Salvation is an exhale, not an inhale. You don't invite Christ into your heart. That is an inhale. You believe in Jesus Christ, faith flows out from your soul to God, and this is an exhale. That's why the Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The "being saved" is entirely his activity, not ours. Our faith flows to him, our salvation is his work, therefore, when we send forth even the smallest amount of faith toward Jesus Christ, we are saved. Salvation is the outgoing of faith toward Christ, it is an exhale, and the actual salvation is entirely his work, not ours.

JAMES 2:17 "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." "Even so" is from "houtos kai" and it refers to the illustration used in the previous verse. It is referring back to the illustrations we have just studied. It refers back to the shortsighted usher who showed partiality to "Mr. Gold Fingers" and ignored "Mr. Ptochos" the poor man. It refers back to the illustration of how when the poor came asking for help only words were given them instead of the things they needed. It takes us back to the person who gave words instead of food and words instead of clothing. Then we have the word "faith" and it comes from "He pistis" and it means "the faith." This is a technical term for doctrine. It refers to the exhale of faith at the point of salvation. The person he is referring to is saved, he exhaled faith toward Christ and was saved.

### Summary

1. "He pistis" is a technical term and refers to faith in Christ at the point of salvation.
2. Here in this verse, it refers to faith in Christ at the point of salvation and is an exhale faith.
3. Faith implies the absence of human merit.

ACTS 18:27 "And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:"

ROMANS 4:16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,"

4. Faith is non-meritorious thinking.
5. In salvation, the whole value of faith lies in the object. The Bible says, "Have faith in God." The "In God" is the important thing about the faith. The faith may be ever so small, but if it is in the right object, then it will develop into something that really works for us and is sufficient for mature living. Therefore, the subject can take no credit for the accomplishments, the credit always goes to the object of faith. God found a way to save us and all the credit goes to him.
6. In living the Christian life, the object of faith is The Word of God under the principle of grace perception. We learn in the soul and it is transferred over into the human spirit and we have it stored up there ready for use.

In salvation the object of faith is Christ. In living out the Christian life every day, the object of faith is The Word of God. The power in salvation is in Jesus Christ. In living out the Christian life every day, the power resides in doctrine, in The Word of God. So for the Christian, the whole object of attending worship services is to listen, to listen, to keep on listening. The main emphasis in a church program needs to be on the teaching of doctrine, not on the programs of action and production.

#### The main task of the Pastor-teacher

Now it so happens that we live in a day when the pastor-teacher is smothered by a lot of functions and a lot of programs. He is called to run here and there at the beck and call of almost everyone in the community. But any pastor-teacher worth his salt must learn how to close his office door and stay with the Word until he is ready to stand before the people and say "thus sayeth The Lord." The priesthood of the pastor-teacher doesn't call for him to get out and hustle in every activity going on in the community. He needs to sit down and listen to the thrilling message of the Word of God and fill his mind with doctrinal truth. The pastor-teacher is called "didaskalos" and this means a man communicating to a group. These Jesus freaks going around with signs on their cars "Honk the horn if you love Jesus" is just about as near to blasphemy as one can get. That kind of silly activity is no substitute for doctrine. Your faith must have a working object, and your faith is not doing the working, but the object is doing the working. Bible doctrine is the object of faith. Now that's exactly what James is saying here. When Bible doctrine becomes the working object, then we have an impact, but if Bible doctrine is not the working object, then about all we have is Madison Avenue window dressing. A lot of hot air and a lot of emotion and that's about all. A lot of work that is going on in the church today is nothing but a lot of screwball window dressing and it has no impact on the Christian life. Many programs grow a lot of scar tissue freaks and reversionistic freaks and emotional revolt freaks and they call it real Christianity.

#### Doctrine The Working Object

Every day of your life the only way you can succeed as a Christian and grow into what God wants you to be is to make doctrine the working object of your faith. If you do this, it will never occur to you that you are to receive any glory or credit for your accomplishments. God found a way for his power to function in your life, and that way is

through doctrine working in you every hour of every day. The one thing the Devil hates most is Bible doctrine stored in the human spirit on the launching pad, ready to go into action at a moment's notice. This is the one thing the Devil can't confront. The subject of the Book of James is this--FAITH MUST HAVE A WORKING OBJECT. Now who did the work in salvation? You know--Jesus Christ did all the work. That's why John said, "The night cometh when no man can work." Yes, the night came that day on the cross when it got dark at noon, and for three hours he did all the work for our salvation and no man could do any work. So look at it this way--You can't be saved by inviting Jesus into your heart, by walking down an aisle, by writing your name on a card and by joining the church. You can't be saved that way, you can't even be "glooooooosly" saved that way. It is his work all the way in salvation, Jesus Christ is the working object in salvation. We need to have something going for us and working for us, and that something is Bible doctrine.

#### Don't Rebel Against This Idea

Maybe you have been fed a program, and you have your little "Do-it-yourself-kit" in your little action program. If that is your case, the the book of James will not appeal to you. But you remember that I told you this--if any real work of worth or value is to be done in you, it is the work of Jesus Christ as he takes Bible doctrine and remakes and reshapes your thinking and living. "We are his workmanship."

#### You Take Hands Off

You remember that slogan of the baking company--"We Bake It While You Sleep." Now that's the way it is in the Christian life. That bread is there for us and all we have to do in the morning is wake up and eat it. It is exactly that way with Bible doctrine. God has it ready for us, fresh every morning. That was the lesson he taught the Children of Israel in the desert when he gave them Manna every morning. Now some thoughtless person will say, "I went once to Bible class and it didn't do that for me." But you remember this--it is the only thing that will work and you better go back and start over and start putting some spiritual gasoline in that spiritual tank of yours, so your spiritual motor can perform as it ought.

#### Look At The Other Side Of The Coin

The unbeliever gets nothing but condemnation for his faith, because he places his faith in the wrong object. He puts his faith in his works, his good deeds, his accomplishments. That's why the Bible says, "The Devils believe and tremble." Why? Because demons are unsaved angels and they do not have the saving object of faith. Not being saved they can't go on to the working object of Bible doctrine. They miss the boat at both places. When there is believing but no object to put it in, then it doesn't amount to anything. It's like having the gasoline tank but having no gas in it. This is dramatically illustrated by the great white judgment throne. They stand there and are rejected because they have not made Jesus Christ the object of their faith. They have made something other than Jesus or nothing, the object of their faith. There is one object of faith in salvation and that object is Jesus Christ. There is one object of living the Christian life and that object is Bible doctrine. The total belief of all unbelievers in the world isn't enough to save one soul because their faith has no working object. But the tiny belief of one soul, if that faith is in the working object Jesus Christ, is sufficient for salvation and it lasts forever.

Faith, Not Doing

Faith is therefore not something we do, but it is the channel by which we appropriate what has been done for us. What God has done for us is the reason why salvation is eternal, everlasting. I can't commit a sin great enough to cancel out what God has done for me. Salvation is finished, and if you have a finished work, it is eternal. The only unpardonable sin is not to have Christ working for you as the working object of your faith.

Non-Meritorious Perception

Faith, therefore, is non-meritorious perception which is compatible with the grace of God. Under the grace of God, God does all the working. So faith is a bona fide system of thinking.

Faith Alone Is Nothing

Faith in itself is nothing. But when faith has an efficacious object, then it is everything. There are two efficacious objects of faith in this human life.

In salvation the object of faith is Jesus Christ.

In living out the Christian life, the object of faith is Bible Doctrine.

A Poor Substitute

So many believers are saved, but they never get out of the baby stage. They had a working object in their salvation, namely, Christ. But now they fail to move on and obtain a working object in living the Christian life. They are the milk-fed Christians Paul talks about in Corinthians. Having no doctrine in the soul, an emotional revolt has taken over. They substitute activity and work for faith production, and it is as filthy rags in God's sight.

In this 17th verse of the 2nd chapter of James, we have an "if" and it is a third class condition. It is ean plus the subjunctive of "echo". It means the believer has a free will and God isn't going to force him into the study of doctrine if his spirit rebels against it. The word for "works" is the accusative plural of "ergon" and this refers to the production of divine good. Faith must have a working object and that object is Bible doctrine. It is doctrine that produces "ergon." It produces the right mental attitude, it produces Christ-like qualities, and it produces divine good. So don't short circuit this truth and try to substitute something else for doctrine. There is no quick way, no hustling way, to become a mature believer. We must take a portion of the manna from heaven every day of our lives.

So this phrase really says, "If it does not have production." Faith has to produce and the only thing that produces is doctrine in the soul. This is the doer of the Word. The missing link between faith and works is doctrine, the Word of God. You can work your head off and be operationally dead.

"Is dead" and this is a present, active, indicative of "eimi." It means it is a fact. "Nekros" is the word for dead and it means a corpse, and it means observable death. Keeps on being observably dead. "Kata" and it means according to the standard of itself. The verse says--"So also the faith, if it does not have production, a working object, it keeps on being observably dead according to itself."

ary

1. Faith must have as its object something that works for it. Faith is non-meritorious so it has to depend on something outside itself to work for it.
2. Therefore faith must be centered in something that works. In salvation it is Jesus Christ. In living the Christian life it is Bible doctrine.
3. In our passage here, the working object of faith is Bible doctrine. It provides all that is needed in the life.
4. Faith, without a bona fide working object like Bible doctrine, is observably dead. And we have a lot of dead people today working in the churches. God found a grace way to work for us and his perfect character was not compromised in the process. God's blessings toward us are based on his perfect character.
5. The prepositional phrase "Being alone" means faith alone is non-productive.
6. Bible doctrine must always be the working object of faith.
7. Both inhale and exhale faith must have doctrine as its object.

JAMES 2:18 "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." We have a debater's technique here.

The word translated "yea" is "alla" and it means "but."

"But a man may say." Anyone may say this. It is a future, active, indicative of "lego." The thing he says is "Thou hast faith" and it is a present, active, indicative of "echo," and it means to have and to hold. The word faith is "pistis" and it is here without a definite article in front of it and it refers to faith without any working object. It is talking about faith dangling, faith standing alone. It is dangling because it does not have doctrine as its object.

On the other hand "I have works." The word for "and I" is "Kogo" and James here goes back and picks up a word from classical greek. It was used in a debate to say something like this, "You have a little bit of nothing and I have a lot of something that really is important."

"Shew me" and this is an aorist, active, imperative of "deiknumi" and means demonstrate, exhibit. Begin to exhibit your faith (which you can't) but I'll show you my works. They can't see what you have inside, but they can see what I am doing overtly. Demonstrate for me your faith apart from your works. The man will see the works but he is not able to see the working object, which is doctrine. But it is the working object that must do the producing.

The real purpose of the Christian life is not to run out and work without doctrine, but to get doctrine and then work with doctrine as the springboard.

I had on my door at the Southern Baptist Seminary a little plaque placed there by a couple from North Carolina who had furnished that room. It said, "The world will wait for your service until you are fully prepared." You demonstrate your faith apart from your work--leaving out the most important thing which is doctrine. Then I will demonstrate my faith out from the source of my working faith which is doctrine. The straw man eliminates everything in this book we have studied thus far--eliminates doctrine and substitutes man's work for God's work. This straw man here in the debate is the typical mixed up Christian who substitutes what he does for what the work of God through doctrine wants to do in his life.