

Faith and Works

By A.P. Adams

Having read the two preceding articles some perhaps someone will feel inclined to ask, "**has not the individual anything to do toward his own salvation? Is he altogether like clay in the potter's hands? Does not the Bible tell us to *"work out our own salvation?"*** (Phil. 2:12) , to *"make our calling and election sure?"*(II Pet. 1:10);: that *"faith without works is dead?"* (James 2:17), **etc. Is there nothing for man to do?"** I answer, yes. But what is the nature and the purpose of this doing? Christians do the wrong thing and with the wrong motive, hence their doing is a snare and a stumbling stone, causing them to *"fall from grace"* (Gal 5:4), rather than to *"grow in grace"* (II Pet. 3: 18). Let us see about this doing.

In the first place I would say most emphatically that we cannot **do** anything to make ourselves like God. Whatever we do for such a purpose is labor lost; and worse than lost; for as long as we are trying in the slightest degree to **work** for our salvation we thereby demonstrate that we have *"fallen from grace,"* and are living under the shadow of Sinai. All our doing that amounts to anything is the **spontaneous** outgrowth of the Spirit of Christ **within** us, so far as it is developed; and such doing does not make us **more** like Christ, but simply shows us how near like him we have already become. Thus we work **out** the salvation that God works **in**. We can do no more than this. We cannot work out any salvation that we have not already **in** us. We do not work for salvation, but simply work out the salvation we have already. *"It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:13). Christians are continually trying to do God's work. They try to make themselves good, or at least to help improve themselves, or, finally, at least, to **help** improve themselves; they work **in**, trying to get **more** salvation, instead of working **out** the salvation they have already. Put the bight of a rope under your feet and then take the two ends in your hands and try to lift;

how high can you raise yourself? Just so high and no higher can you lift yourself spiritually by anything that you can **do**. Settle this question now once for all, and "*cease from your own works*" (Heb. 4:10).

"Cast thy deadly doing down,

All down at Jesus' feet."

Our doing is a manifestation of our state of grace, our degree of spiritual growth; it is an effect, not a cause, the outgrowth, not the source, of our faith; the fruit of the tree, not the tree itself. Our doing is a gauge to measure the depths of the spirit within us. "*Be filled with the Spirit*" (Eph. 5:18), is the command; but we come far short of such fulness, and are more likely to be very shallow in our spiritual state; our doing marks the depth. Again, our doing is not a **stepping** stone to heaven, but a **milestone** in the way of life, to show us how far we are along. Now most Christians view this matter in the way just opposite to the truth. They must **do** in order to be right within; being faithful is **doing** a great deal; their doing they think is the **means** of spiritual growth, the way to increase their faith; in their estimation it is the tree that is to bring forth all the fruits of the spirit, and a ladder by which to climb to heaven. Christians do not **express** their view thus directly, but practically the above is their faith. This is a subtle snare of the devil, and oft times those who think they are trusting in God, are in reality trusting in self. Remember that a very little of this legal doing will vitiate and neutralize a great deal of faith. You cannot even **help** in the smallest degree to save yourself or to make yourself better any more than the clay can help the potter. If anything beautiful and good is ever made of you, God must do it, and He alone. "*Let these sayings sink down into your ears*" (Lk. 9:44).

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Christian, as I have said, has something to do. What we need to know is, what it is, and the purpose of it. But as works are the **outgrowth** of faith, the fruit, and **not** the tree, logically and practically faith comes first, hence before saying any more on works, we will ask,

What is Faith?

First, I would reply negatively in the language of Scripture, "***The law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them***" (Gal. 3:12). If you want to get salvation by doing, even by the least bit of doing, go back to Sinai, you have no need of Calvary. The word faith does not occur in the Old Testament except twice, while it occurs hundreds of times in the New. Read on this point very carefully verse by verse, the whole of **Galatians Three**. We shall refer to this further anon. In the realm of law, faith has no place; and yet the law must be the "***child leader***" (Gal. 3:24), and it must come **before** the gospel; we shall see why presently.

In seeking an answer to the question, what is faith, we need not blunder about among the wordy disquisitions of men, or the unreasonable creeds of the churches. We have a plain direct Bible answer. "***Faith is the substance*** (i.e. foundation or ground) ***of things hoped for, the evidence*** (proof) ***of things not seen***" (Heb. 11: 1). Let us study this definition. "***Faith is the foundation of things hoped for.***" "***We are saved by hope,***" (Rom. 8:24) says the apostle in another place; but it is not any and all hope but a hope established on scriptural faith. Faith is the foundation of hope. but what is the foundation of faith? The **truth**, I answer, for "***faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God***" (Rom. 10:17). Now we have "***The Word of God***" (Acts 12:24; 18:11; Eph. 6:17; Col. 1:25; I Ths. 2:13; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:2; 19:13), as the foundation of faith; and faith as the foundation of hope. It will not do to leave out either of these foundations. A hope that is not founded on a scriptural faith is shadowy and vain, a faith that is not founded on the truth, God's word, (John 18: 17) is a dead and worthless faith. These, truth and faith, are the massive blocks that build up a solid pedestal for that "***hope which is an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast and which entereth into that within the veil***" (Heb. 6:19).

The first important point then regarding faith is that it is **founded upon the truth, or knowledge of God**, for all truth is knowledge of God. Our faith in God will be in proportion to our knowledge of Him. Thus it is always; we cannot have much faith in a stranger or in one with whom we are slightly acquainted. In proportion as we know a worthy person, as we become better and better acquainted with him, so our faith in him increases. So it is in our relationship with God; it is but reasonable that the better we know God the

more we should trust him, the less we know him the weaker will be our faith. Thus we see how true it is that the foundation of faith is knowledge of God. Every advanced Christian knows how true this is in his own experience. When he was a **"babe in Christ"** (I Cor. 3:1), his faith was weak and wavering; but as he **"grew in grace"** (II Pet. 3:18), and **"increased in the knowledge of God"** (Lk. 2:40), his faith continually strengthened. This is an important point, and one that many Christians miss. They realize that faith is important, but they do not understand that it is founded on knowledge. Hence they try to work up a great faith with very little knowledge of God. People but **slightly** acquainted with the Lord **strain** after an enormous faith; thus building with wood, hay and stubble, instead of gold, silver and precious stones. (I Cor. 3:12). There is a great deal of foolish talk among Christians, about believing. Seekers after religion are told to **"believe only believe."** Seekers after sanctification are given the same advice. **"Believe, believe all you have to do is believe: believe you are saved and you are saved;" "believe you are holy and you are holy;"** and so on to the end of the chapter. Such teachers of faith are **"blind leaders of the blind"** (Matt. 15:14); and such a faith is a castle in the air; a mere intense screwing up of the will to say that you believe something of which you know but little or nothing, and which your own common sense tells you is not so. Learn this truth: **"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."** **Hear the Word!** (Lk. 11:28). **Study the Word!** (II Tim. 2:15). **"Search the Scriptures"** (Jn. 5:39), and so get acquainted with God, become one of His **"friends"** (James 2:23), to know what he is doing, and you will not have to struggle to get your faith up to a certain pitch, as one might strain himself to blow up a big bladder and have nothing but a bag of wind after all, but your faith will grow spontaneously with your knowledge, yea, it will **"grow exceedingly"** (II Thess. 1:3), like the tiny mustard seed from a mere speck to a **"great tree"** (Matt. 13:31-32), **"a finished"** (Heb. 12:2), perfected faith at the coming of the Lord.

Now I think we can understand why the law was necessary, and why it must come before the gospel. The purpose of the law is given in Rom. 3: 20, 21. **"By the law is the knowledge of sin,"** and it is also a **"witness"** of **"the righteousness of God."** In other words the law gives us knowledge of self,

and knowledge of God. I do not intend now to notice the former thought; but simply notice how the law gives us knowledge of God. The whole system of the law is one of God's revelations of himself to man. All the ceremonies and forms, all the paraphernalia of the temple, the priesthood, the sacrifices, etc., etc., all these are types, shadows, patterns, figures of the *"things pertaining to God,"* thus revealing the Creator to the creature. Hence the law must come before the gospel which inculcates the way of faith, because the law gives us knowledge of God, the **foundation** of faith. The order of development in this respect is as follows. First comes the law, giving us **knowledge of God** in type and shadow. Then comes Christ, the most perfect **revelation of God** and hence giving us the most perfect knowledge of God. Then, established upon this knowledge, comes **faith, begetting** blessed **hope** that lifts the veil of the future and gives us a foretaste of heaven. Then in the next age comes **sight**, a clear view of all that was dimly foreshadowed in the law, face to face with our Savior, hope merged in glad fruition, and the actual realization of all that we now claim by faith.

Now all this is set forth in **Gal. 3**. In the first place the apostle makes it plain here that the gospel is the realm of faith and not law. *"Received ye the spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the spirit are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"* (Verses 2-3). The law is of the flesh, faith is of the spirit. These Galatian Christians were trying to do what the church has not ceased to try to do to this day, namely to **unite the law and the gospel in the same dispensation**; this is an **impossible union**. Under the law, there was **no faith**; see verses 12, 23-25. When faith comes, we are no longer under the law; the two are mutually exclusive; you must choose between them, for you cannot live under them both at the same time. Which shall it be, Sinai or Calvary? Law or gospel? Works or faith? Moses or Christ? Do not deceive yourself by supposing that you can mix law and faith together, that while you are an *"heir of the righteousness which is by faith"* (Rom. 4:13), you may also be *"under the law"* (Rom. 2:12; I Cor. 9:20). *"Are ye so foolish? having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"*

Of all professing Christians, the most to be pitied are those who profess to believe on Christ, and to have entered the covenant of grace, and yet at the

same time are trying to stagger along under the yoke of the law which neither the apostles nor their fathers were able to bear. (Acts 15:10). They might as well try to walk on both sides of a stone wall at the same time; they might as well try to walk in opposite directions simultaneously. The apostle goes on to illustrate faith, as he does in Rom. 4, by Abraham, **"the father of the faithful."** **"Abraham believed God"** (Rom. 4:3). That is all Abraham did, **"and it was accounted to him** (set down to his account) **as righteousness"** (Rom. 4:3). There's the whole scheme of justification by faith in a nutshell. Now do not try to tack anything on to it; let it be plain and simple, **faith** accounted for **righteousness**. Now right here I would notice how Abraham's faith illustrates the truth that knowledge is the **foundation of faith**. If Abraham had not had **knowledge of God** he never could have believed him, because God told Abraham something that humanly speaking was not true. **"A father of many nations have I made thee; and I have made thee exceeding fruitful, and I have established my covenant between Me and thee, and I have given to thee and to thy seed after thee the land of thy sojournings, and I have become their God,"** (Ed. Note: This verse is Gen. 17: 5,7,8, but the version is unknown to me. J.A.) ,and so on. According to the common version, verse 8 is contradicted by Acts 7: 5. In verse 8, God promises to give the land to Abraham, but according to Acts 7: 5, God did not keep his promise, for Stephen says that God **"gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on."** There is a discrepancy here in the letter. But when we see the spirit of this passage, when we understand that God is speaking in the past tense according to the rule that he **"calleth those things that be not as though they were"** (Rom. 4:17), and when we see furthermore, that the whole passage is prophetic and spiritual, referring to the true seed (Gal. 3:16) and the true land of promise (Heb. 11: 16), etc., etc., then we shall understand that there is no discrepancy, but perfect harmony.

This view makes the passage clear to us; and we can also see that if Abraham had not been well acquainted with the Lord he never could have believed him when he spoke of those things that were not as, as though they were. And herein lies the greatness of Abraham's faith, and the ground of his claim to the title of the **"Father of the faithful"** (Rom. 4:16). It was **"before faith came"** (Gal. 3:23), that Abraham thus believed God, way back in the dim

period of type and shadow and allegory; and he believed not only a promise in the future tense, and one which in the common course of nature was impossible, but when **God spoke in the past tense** as though the thing were already accomplished, although as yet God's word had not begun to be carried out, for *"the seed had not come to whom the promise was made"* (Gal. 3: 19), not even the typical seed much less the true seed, yet *"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith giving glory to God; being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform"* (Rom. 4:20). Can we not see how mighty and wonderful Abraham's faith was? and that he is worthy to stand at the head of those who *"believe God?"* (I Jn. 5:10) and can we not see also from this illustration what faith is, and how it is dependent on knowledge? Faith takes God at his word, and *"staggers not,"* even when the *"wisdom of this world"* (I Cor. 20-21), would say, and, humanly speaking, say it truthfully too, that God's word was not true. But a faith that measures up to this Abrahamic standard is one that is founded on a knowledge of *"the deep things of God"* (I Cor. 2:10).

Now we will notice further the **third** chapter of **Galatians**. The apostle goes on to show that *"as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse"* (Vs. 10), but that *"Christ hath redeemed us from this curse"* (Vs. 13), for He is *"the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"* (Rom. 10: 4). Mark it well, if you have not come to *"the end of the law;"* you have not come to **Christ**, a truth that we shall find still further confirmed in this same chapter. The apostle goes on to set forth the true seed, *"which is Christ"* (Gal. 3:16), and to tell why the law comes in between the promise and its fulfillment; *"it was added because of transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise was made"* (Gal. 3:19). *"Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid"*(Gal. 3:21). It is preliminary to it; it gives us a needful discipline and training to prepare us for the way of faith, as the apostle goes on to show. *"Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our child-leader unto* (i.e. until we get to) *Christ"* (Gal. 3:24). There are two very misleading errors here in the common version. First, instead of **schoolmaster** it should be child-leader, the

figure is taken from the ancient custom of having slaves attend the children to and from the school; such a slave was not by any means a schoolmaster, but one to lead the child to school, when he was handed over to the charge of the schoolmaster. The other error here is in the supplied words, *"to bring us."* These words are **not** in the original as is indicated by their being in italics, but are supplied by the translators to make out the sense, as, doubtless, they supposed; but they make the passage express an untruth. The law does **not** bring us to Christ; this is not the purpose of the law. The law brings us to **ourselves**; it slays us; (Rom. 7:11) it brings us to a **knowledge** of the horrible pit in which we are sunk, and leaves us there, for it has **no power** to help us out. The law brings us into that condition of perfect self despair where Christ can help us (Rom. 7:24, 25), but if Christ did not come to us we should never be helped, for the law would never bring us to Him. What Paul means here, I think, is as follows. The law deals with man in his childhood, the *"natural man,"* restraining and checking and condemning him until he gets far enough along to cry out *"O wretched man!"* (Rom. 7:24). Then the law has done all for him that it can at that stage of his development, and Christ takes him up; he begins to attend the school of Christ to learn how to escape the deadly grip of the law (Rom. 6) and to *"obtain the righteousness which is by faith"* (Rom. 1:17; 9:30). Now read the next two verses: *"The law was our child-leader unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith* (we never could be justified by law). *But after that faith is come we are no longer under a child-leader, for ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ"* (Gal. 3:24-25). Thus we have learned two important facts about faith. **1.** It is dependent upon, and in proportion to, our knowledge of God *"Faith comes by hearing; and hearing by the Word of God"* (Rom. 10:17). **2.** It has no place in the law, and the law has no place in it. *"The Law is not of faith;"* (Gal. 3:12) *"After that faith is come we are no longer under the child-leader"* law.

Now we will notice a little further. Heb. 11:1, *"Faith is the foundation of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* Rotherham renders this passage thus: *"Faith is of things hoped for, a confidence, of facts, a conviction, when they are not seen."* This brings out the apostle's meaning very clearly. The foundation or confidence of our hope is faith, a scriptural

faith, itself founded on knowledge of God. This explanation reminds us of Heb. 3: 6. We are Christ's house "***if*** [an important if!] ***we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.***" (Heb. 2:6). Notice another important "***if***" in the 14th verse of the same chapter). A hope that has no foundation, one in which we have no confidence, is a worthless hope. It is our faith that gives confidence; our faith in God's word is the foundation, broad and solid, of our expectations of future good.

As yet, we have **actually** experienced nothing of our hope. We are yet unborn (Luke 20: 36). We are yet lifeless (Col. 3:3, I Cor. 15: 23). "***The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God.***" All we have now is **faith** and **hope**. We live by faith. We are saved by hope. But this faith may be so strong, if we **know** God (Jer. 19: 23, 24), that we may actually speak of the realization of it as in the past, as Paul does in Eph. 2 and Col. 3, N. V. [**Ed Note: here, Adams refers to "the New Version," which I've found somewhat akin to the American Revised Standard Version. JA**]; and our hope, founded upon such a faith, will be "***as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast***" (Heb. 6:19).

Is it not clear that "***faith is the foundation of things hoped for?***" It is equally true that it is, "***of facts, a conviction, when they are not seen.***" The only things in this world that really deserve to be called facts are the "***unseen things***" (II Cor. 4:18); the things discerned, not by natural sense, but by faith. Of course this is contrary to worldly wisdom, which will acknowledge nothing as facts that does not come under the cognizance of the natural senses, or is not established by evidence plain to the natural man. Hence "***the things of the spirit of God***" are "***foolishness***" to the natural man (I Cor. 3:14); and yet these only are the enduring, the eternal things. But they can be apprehended only by the spiritual sense; and oh, how solid and substantial they appear to the one who, with anointed vision (Rev. 3: 18), is able to see "***afar off***" (Heb. 11: 13; II Peter 1: 9), and having his spiritual "***senses exercised by reason of use***" (Heb. 5:14), can interpret the allegory, type, figure, pattern and shadow, so as to apprehend the truth thereby concealed!

"The steps of faith fall on the seeming void,

But find the Rock beneath."

Thanks be unto God for the solid facts that faith enables us to grasp! God can make ***"the things that are not seen"*** (II Cor. 4: 18), so plain and positive to us that they will indeed appear as **facts**; the things that we grasp by faith will seem the most solid (in fact, the only **solid** things) of all others.

Why? **Because they rest on God's word.** ***"The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"*** (Is. 40:5), and it cannot fail. Happy is the man that thus knows the way of faith. ***"Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him"*** (Ps. 1:12). O ye called and chosen ones, ***"HAVE FAITH IN GOD"*** (Mark 11:22).

Some other thoughts on faith, and the further consideration of the other part of the subject, Works, I must leave for the next paper. [Ed. Note: **George Hawtin apparently included both articles into this one which he published in his "Present Truth" series.**]

In the next paper we shall endeavor to "see Jesus" in still other aspects and characteristics.

Faith and Works

In the last paper we considered principally the subject, **faith**; in this one, we will take up, **works**; and then, with both sides of the question in mind, we shall be the better prepared to understand some further thoughts on faith in a future paper. The question then for present consideration is,

What are the works

by which faith is made perfect, and without which faith is dead? (Jas. 2:17, 22). There seems to be a most positive contradiction between Paul and James. ***"Was not Abraham our father justified by works?"*** (Jas. 2:21) asks the latter apostle, and then adds, ***"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only"*** (Vs. 24). But Paul says, ***"If Abraham were justified by works he hath whereof to glory, but not before God; for what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness; now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt, but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that***

justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4: 2-4); furthermore Paul teaches most positively that we are justified by faith and **not** by works. There seems to be a very manifest contradiction here between the two apostles; but all appearance of contradiction vanishes when we see that Paul is talking about one kind of works and James is talking about another kind. The former apostle is referring to the **works of the law** and declares that by **such works** no flesh can be justified; this truth we noticed in the last paper; we are justified by **faith** (Rom. 5:1) ***"without the works of the law"*** (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16), for ***"the law is not of faith"*** (Gal. 3:12). On the other hand James refers to works that do justify, works that manifest a living faith and make it perfect. These are the works we need to know and understand; these are the works we desire to do that we may stand complete at last. What are these works? I answer, **works in harmony with the plan of God and the *"present truth"*** (II Pet. 1:12).

Let me explain this answer. I will take the case of Noah as an illustration. Noah lived at a wonderful era in the world's history; it was a transition period between ***"the world that was before the flood"*** and ***"the heavens and the earth which are now"*** (II Pet. 3: 6, 7). We read that because of the corruption of mankind, God had determined to destroy them; a fearful calamity was impending, involving the total destruction of the entire human race, and the world ***"knew not until the flood came and took them all away"*** (Matt. 24: 39). But did no one know? Did God warn no one of the impending ruin? It would have been altogether contrary to his rule of action had he not done so. When he was about to destroy Sodom and the wicked cities of the plain he told his ***"friend"*** (Gen. 28:17, 18); and ***"Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secrets unto his servants, the prophets"*** (Amos 3: 7). So at this time God told Noah of what he had determined to do, and gave him directions how to act that he might save himself and family. Noah believed God; he had perfect faith in his word; but what would that have amounted to if he had not **gone to work** and built the ark? ***"Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?"*** (Jas. 2:22). Noah, with all his faith, would not have been saved any more than ***"the world of the ungodly"*** (II Pet. 2:5), if he had not built the ark. But, becoming acquainted with God's plan, being in the light and ***"knowing what his Lord was***

doing," he **believes** and then **acts** according to that faith, and so is saved. ***"By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and become heir of the righteousness which is by faith"*** (Heb. 11: 7). Here then is the true doctrine concerning faith and works.

Zealous Christians are always very much exercised about **doing** some thing for the Lord? and they have a great deal to say about faith without works being dead; etc. This is very true, but what **kind** of works? The common idea is that the works that should accompany a living faith are deeds of charity and benevolence, reading the Bible, praying, speaking in religious meetings, trying to save souls, etc., etc.; but all these are not of the **slightest account** as **justifying** works; they are very good in their way if engaged in intelligently, with the right motive, and in a proper manner; but they do not make us one whit better, or raise us a hair's breadth towards God, or have any effect whatsoever on our justification, unless, as is often the case, they cause us to stumble in the way of life and to ***"fall from grace"*** (Gal. 5:4). I noticed in the last paper the relationship of such works to the Christian life; these are not the sort of works that James refers to as making our faith perfect, and by which we are justified; this word rendered justified means literally to make right. Now what are the works that make us right with God? works in harmony with God's plan and the ***"present truth,"*** I reply again. We can see how clearly this is illustrated in the case of Noah as reviewed above. The work that made him right was the building of the ark; he was a ***"preacher of righteousness,"*** but his **preaching** would not have made him right at that time, there was need of something else; he had faith; he was ***"established in the present truth"*** (II Pet. 1: 12); the special truth that was due at that time; the ark was the thing needed **then**; and he and his house were saved thereby. But the works that made **him** right will never make anyone else right; there has never been any need of an ark since and never will be again. How then shall we know what are justifying works in our day, so that **we** may be made right and demonstrate ourselves the possessors of a living faith? By walking in the **truth**, I reply; (III John 3, 4), by knowing what our Lord is doing (John 15:15), as Noah and Abraham did; in short, by working in harmony with God; by being a ***"laborer together with Him"*** (I Cor. 3:9).

Now we will notice further how this view is confirmed by the apostle James; he illustrates justifying works by the works of Abraham and Rahab; in both cases it will be seen at once that their works made them **right** because they were in harmony with God's plan and the present truth, i.e. the truth due just at that time. They were not works of charity or benevolence, or religious observances, or anything of the kind called "**good works**" in these days by most Christians. When Abraham was called upon to offer up Isaac, God was "trying" him, but more especially God was working out a wonderful allegory that in future ages should teach his children great and momentous truths. Abraham was a type of God; (Rom. 4:17, margin). Isaac his son, his "**only son**" (Gen. 22:2), was a type of Christ, the Son of God, the "**only begotten**" (Jn. 3:16, 18; Heb. 11:17; I Jn. 4:9); Abraham's offering up Isaac was a type of the Father's offering up "**his only begotten Son,**" etc., etc.; thus we can see how wonderfully woven into God's plan was the work of Abraham, by which the apostle tells us his faith was made perfect. The case of Rahab was similar to that of Noah's, a terrible ruin was impending over her people; their cup of iniquity was full and overflowing, and God was about to visit awful retribution upon them; there was only one way of escape, viz., by making friends with God's people, the chosen instruments of that retribution; in some way Rahab knew this and believed it (Josh. 2: 8-13) and acting in harmony with that faith, she, like Noah, did the only thing possible for the salvation of herself and house; hence she "**perished not with them that believed not**" (Heb. 11:31). Her works were the outgrowth of her faith, which faith was founded upon knowledge, a knowledge of what God was doing just at that time, and hence her works were justifying works, works that made her right for "**the time then present.**"

Now all this is most fully set forth in Heb. 11; this chapter is a perfect sermon on faith and works. Read the chapter and you will find that the faith in every case was founded upon a knowledge of the "**present truth**"; the works were in accordance with that faith and therefore "**these all obtained a good report through faith**" (Heb. 11:39). This eleventh chapter of Hebrews fully harmonizes Paul and James on the subject of faith and works. In the first place we are told what faith is, as I noticed in the last paper, and then the subject of works is fully amplified, and the relation between the two; just read this chapter through on this subject and note the **kind** of works each one

performed, and you will understand the works that justify or make us right. Notice how it reads: by **faith** a certain person **did** a certain thing; in every case the work he performed was the natural outgrowth of his faith; and his faith was founded upon a knowledge of God's plans and purposes of grace. Here then is a plain, inspired and infallible explanation of this whole subject. You need not misunderstand the scriptural doctrine of faith and works if you will only thoroughly study this chapter.

Now then in the light of this view what is the first thing to be done in order that we may have a living faith accompanied by justifying works? **We must have a knowledge of God's Word.** "*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God*" (Rom. 10:17), a faith that is not established upon the truth is good for nothing, no matter how strong or sincere it may be. How could Abel have had the proper kind of faith and works if he had not first had knowledge? What would Noah's faith have amounted to without a knowledge of the "**present truth**" the truth that was due then, viz.: the coming of the flood? So with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all the worthies who "*died in faith*" Whereby it is plain that a strong faith comes, not by a tremendous effort to inflate our credulity to extraordinary dimensions by mere will power, but by a calm, sensible study of the truth of God; a comprehension of his wonderful plan, and especially by keeping up with the development of that plan, so as to be "*established in the present truth*" (II Pet. 1:12). Thus founded our faith will "*grow exceedingly,*" and be the source of works that will be in harmony with God, thus constituting us "*Laborers together with him*" (I Cor. 3: 9). When we labor with God we accomplish something, though we ourselves are very weak; "*our sufficiency is of God*" (II Cor. 3:5). When we labor out of God's order, no matter how good the motive, nor how zealously we work, we are simply "*as one that beateth the air*" (I Cor. 9:26), "*there shall be no might in thine hand*" (Deut. 28:32). Take a Bible illustration. King David purposed in his heart to build a temple to the Lord (II Sam. 7); it was a laudable purpose prompted by the best of motives. But the Lord said, no, thou shalt not build me a house, but Solomon thy son shall build it. Now suppose David had persisted in undertaking to build the temple, would the Lord have been pleased? Surely not; it would have been a good work, but out of God's order, and hence

wrong. *"To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams"* (I Sam. 15:22). So the apostle says of the Jews in his day, *"I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge"* (Rom. 10:2). This passage again teaches the importance of knowledge as a foundation; zeal has to do with works, *"but wisdom is profitable to direct"* (Eccl. 10:10). A misdirected zeal, doing anything and everything, in any way and time, out of order and out of season, is worse than doing nothing at all. It is not enough that we see to it that the work we undertake is good in itself, we should be sure that it is in God's **order**; otherwise it is a bad work in its results, however good it may be in itself. The church today is making the same mistake that the Jews made in the days of the apostle; they have a zeal but it is not according to knowledge; they are trying to do great things, and **good** things too, but out of God's order, hence we see nothing but failure, declension and spiritual decrepitude all around us. How shallow the work in her so called revivals! How superficial the experience of most of her members! How inconsistent their lives! How helpless is the church against the giant evils of the day! How worldly in her affections and methods! How pitifully small the results in comparison to the amount expended of labor, money, time, and machinery! What is the trouble? *"God's people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"* (Hos. 4: 6). There is a *"famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord "* (Amos 8: 11).

There is considerable zeal among the churches, but very little knowledge. Many are very busily engaged in so-called good works; ministering to the poor, laboring in the temperance cause, attending church services, engaging in religious observances, etc., but all these things may be done and yet not one particle of living faith. In fact such works may be the certain indication of a total **lack** of faith. Oftentimes Christians try to make up in miscellaneous **doing**, their **lack** of faith and confidence in God, they seem to think that the Lord must not expect much of them in the line of faith and trust, but they will **do** all they can to help the cause along, and pay the bills; and such persons are oftentimes very zealous, and active, and liberal. All such doing in such a spirit and with such a motive is worse than useless, it is absolutely harmful; the individual after a while makes this doing a substitute for all religious exercises and lapses into a confirmed state of carnal legality;

such doing is practically of the law; it is the practicing of that sort of good works that the law enjoins, and when such works are performed **as a means to an end** or as a substitute for faith, "*without which it is impossible to please God*" (Heb. 11:6), it indicates that we are not Christians, "*under grace*" (Rom. 6:14-15), but altogether "*under the law*" (Rom. 2:12; 3:19; I Cor. 9:20; Gal. 4:21). Furthermore such works cannot justify us nor perfect our faith. These are the very kind of works that Paul says can **not** justify us. If the apostle James meant such works, then he would be in flat contradiction to the apostle Paul; the only way we can reconcile the two is by recognizing the fact that they are talking about **different kinds of works**; Paul is talking about legal doing as I have noticed above; James refers to such works as are the **outgrowth** of a faith founded upon a knowledge of "*what our Lord is doing*" for the time being; and the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, as I have also noticed, is a perfect explanation and full illustration of such faith and works.

I would not be understood as disparaging good works of any kind; all deeds of kindness and Christian benevolence, of self denial and religious service are good if they are the spontaneous outgrowth of a heart of love for God and our brother (I John 4: 21). But what are they good for? **Not**, as the means of advancing us in the way of life, much less as a means of recommending us to God's favor, or increasing our credit with heaven, or as a substitute for a spiritual life in heart and practice, but they are good simply because thereby we make ourselves channels through which God's blessings as they come to us flow onward to others, to gladden their hearts and enrich their lives. The moment we become self conscious of such works, and begin to congratulate ourselves on their number and magnitude, or feel complacent and self-satisfied because of them, or still further, when we begin to excuse ourselves for a lack of spiritual power, or laxity in daily life or indifference to heavenly things, or undue pleasure in worldly things, on the ground that we are **doing** so much for the cause of God, then is it evident that our doing is a snare and a curse to us; and we had far better remain idle than engage in such works with such motives.

The true doctrine of faith and works would lead us first to study the Bible, to get acquainted with God and his plan; as we thus come to **know God**; we

begin to **trust** him; faith springs up and increases more and more; we learn that God has a **"due season"** and a **"present truth,"** and we begin to inquire what is God's present truth **now**? In the days of Noah the present truth was the impending destruction of the race by the flood; in the days of Rahab the present truth was the impending destruction of her people: in the days of John the Baptist the present truth was **"Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"** (Matt. 3:2); in the days of the Lord Jesus the present truth was the presence of the long-looked-for Messiah (Luke 19: 44); in the days of Martin Luther and the reformers the present truth was the great doctrine of justification by faith alone, in opposition to the abuses and corruptions of the Romish church; in our day the present truth is, what? The apostle James expresses it when he says, **"The Judge standeth at the door"** (Jas. 5:9). The **"Signs of the times"** (Matt. 16:13) and the **"Scripture of truth"** indicate that the period in which we live is more momentous than any other since the world began. We are living in another transition period, **"as it was in the days of Noah,"** between the **"Heavens and the earth which are now,"** and the **"New heavens and new earth"**; glorious as well as awful events are impending, and the sole protection of **"the man of God"** (II Tim. 3:17) in these **"evil days"** (Eph. 4:13), is **"the Whole Armour of God"** (Eph. 4:13). **"His Truth shall be thy shield and buckler"** (Psa. 91: 4). A living faith is not simply believing, but believing the truth, and that too the present truth. Learn what that truth is, and let thy faith be founded thereon, and thy works correspond hereto, and thou shalt obtain a part in that **"better resurrection"** (Heb. 11: 35), with Jesus and all God's saints.

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