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THE SURE WORD by Jonnie Hutchison

NOT BY FAITH ONLY

Many religious people have been taught and believe strongly that one is saved by faith only exclusive of any kind of works. What does the Bible teach? Here is the answer found in James 2:24, "You see then that a man **is justified by works, and not by faith only.**" How is the teaching of this passage to be explained since it clearly contradicts the popular view of salvation by faith without works?

Faith has always been essential to salvation. Hebrews 11:6 reads, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Jesus said, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." (John 8:24). Question: Who is to do the believing? Does God or Jesus believe for us? Obviously, faith is an action that we humans must do essential to our salvation from sin. On one occasion Jesus was asked, "What shall we do, that we may **work** the works of God?" Jesus answered, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." (John 6:28-29). Jesus describes believing as "working the works of God." How can this be if one is saved by "faith only" without any kind of works?

Throughout the Bible saving faith is always connected with loving obedience to God's commands. James illustrates this truth with the example of Abraham. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?" (James 2:21-22). What made Abraham's faith perfect or complete? He did what God had commanded him and thereby worked the works of God which resulted in justification.

God commands faith in Jesus (John 8:24). God commands "all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). God commands confession of faith in Christ (Romans 10:9-10) God commands immersion in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). When one obeys these commands of God, is he working his own works or the works of God? Is he saved by his own works or the works of God? What separates the saved from the lost is the saved have expressed their faith in humble obedience to what God requires for salvation (Hebrews 5:9).

A living faith is an active obedient faith. As James writes, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26). greenplainchurchofchrist.org.