***Saving Faith vs. Works, No. 10
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**Saving Faith vs. Works**

Being just a little off and getting a little disoriented from direction in time can take you far afield from your objective. That is the problem in spiritual things. A little mistake at one point, that doesn't seem to be all that big a thing, will take you far afield from divine blessing and God's care. And this issue of how you go to Heaven, what constitutes saving faith, is just that kind of an issue. The current discussion seems like a little thing, but it is a mistake which in time will have enormous consequences. The idea that a person is saved on the basis of trusting in Christ plus a committal on his part and intention to live a godly life has contaminated the concept of Free Grace Salvation. Consequently, there is a great difference of opinion within the human race about how one gets into Heaven to avoid Hell. The Bible teaches very clearly there's only one gate and one pathway to God the Father in Heaven, and that is Jesus Christ the Savior of mankind. All methods of salvation, which are devised by the mind of man apart from Scripture, are based on performing religious rituals and good works to earn salvation. These human viewpoint plans all look to man's own efforts to appease the justice of God. But they are all rejected by God.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer taught a class that I was in on the subject of salvation, and the other day I was looking through that particular volume of the Systematic Theology that he wrote. And I noticed a comment that I had written a quotation from him, something he said in class, and I wrote it in the margin of that textbook. He said, "Men never get saved by coaxing something out of God, but by being willing to believe that God has made the provision." And I thought 'that's exactly it.' You don't get saved by coaxing something out of God, by promising to behave yourself or by promising to give money, or by promising to be baptized or anything else. You get saved by accepting what God and free grace has already provided for you. Saving grace, thus, Dr. Chafer was pointing out, was an act of appropriation.

Human beings on their own would never dream of suggesting the plan of salvation which God offers in the Bible. People just don't come up on their own with a Bible plan of salvation. God's plan, which is revealed in the Bible, is of free grace salvation. Faith in Jesus Christ to take you into Heaven is all it takes to be saved, no commitments before, no commitments after, only a commitment to the fact that you believe that God has told the truth: His Son has covered your sin, He will take you in to eternal life.

**Saving Faith is Non-meritorious**

Faith itself is non-meritorious because it is passive. It brings no merit to one for salvation. Faith simply expresses your belief in God's promise to save, and it receives that salvation from Jesus Christ as a gift. You receive His absolute righteousness for your entrance into heaven.

A works-based plan of salvation never provides an assurance of salvation because one never knows whether you have performed sufficient good deeds, whether you have accumulated enough merit to satisfy God. That's why all work-based salvation plans, such as in Roman Catholicism, can never leave a person with the confidence he's going to Heaven. People go out in death with fear. They don't know what's going to be on the other side because they don't know whether they have been good enough to merit the salvation of Christ.

Now, the teachers of Lordship Salvation, while indeed directing the lost sinner to faith in Christ for salvation, define saving faith as a commitment to obey God in all areas of life. They refer to this as making Christ Lord as well as Savior.

The question is, how can a person really be certain at the point of salvation, at the point of believing in Christ, that you have yielded all areas of your life to God's will? When you were saved, did you yield all areas of your life to the will of God? Were you sure at the point of salvation that you did that? How do you separate, in fact, willingness to obey God from failure to do so? Maybe you are willing to obey God, but indeed you failed to do so. As a matter of fact, isn't the fact that you failed an expression of unwillingness?

**Willingness Doesn't Always Produce Obedient Conduct**

So, this is a real problem to say that a Christian, if he has saving faith, has it because he has a determination to yield to the will of God in all areas of his life. Willingness to obey does not always produce genuine surrender in one's conduct. You can read in Matthew 21:28-32 about the man with the 2 sons. He told the one son, go do something. The son said, I'll do it, then didn't. He told another son to do this thing. The son said, no, I won't, then he changed his mind and went and did it. So, you see, here you have willingness to do something and the person doesn't do it, unwillingness to do something and the person does do it. You are in a very fluid area of judgment as to what your attitude is toward willingness or unwillingness to obey God.

The truth is, that I think as we've already shown, the Bible plan of salvation never requires adding to faith in Christ the promise that you will obey his commands as a Christian. This is usually referred to by the word repentance. And Lordship Salvation people are very fanatical about repentance. We won't get into that today. The object of their attack, of course, has been Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, Dallas Seminary, and some of the great theologians of the seminary, all of whom consistently have indicated that the Bible makes it very clear Heaven is attainable on the basis of what Christ has done without any additions or promises on your part.

We'll get into that in greater detail, particularly concerning Dr. Chafer next Sunday. I think you'll be very interested to hear what this man actually had to say and why it is that he has become the brunt of attacks. Dr. John MacArthur in his book "The Gospel According To Jesus" in which he attacks Dr. Chafer, does so on the very first page. The very first footnote, footnote number one, is against Lewis Sperry Chafer and "the false gospel that Chafer taught." So, if we're wrong here, we're going to be far off course when we get out a long distance in time. This is a serious question, serious matter.

Now it is true that salvation does provide one with the ability to produce divine good works. It is true that being born again does enable you to live a godly life. Several Scriptures indicate that: among them Romans 8:1, Romans 8:11, Galatians 5:16-26. All of those indicate to the Christian that you are born again, you have the power of God working in your life, you are capable of being a decent godly human being in the sight of God. That is true, but that's not the issue. Should Christians live like that? Yes. Everything that those 2 Scriptures describe as fitting Christian conduct is what should characterize us.

But that is not the issue. The fruit of the believer, however biblical that fruit may be, cannot be the basis of his assurance that he's going to Heaven. Yes, you should live a godly life. Yes, you should be a participant in Christian service. You should be producing divine good works. You should be making your life count for rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. But whether you do that or not is not the guideline to whether you're saved or not. The guideline to salvation is what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:12 when the apostle Paul says, "For this reason I also suffered these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." The apostle Paul went through a lot of suffering. He took a lot of abuse. He took a lot of ridicule. He says, 'I'm not ashamed of any of that. I am only happy to know that the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I've entrusted my soul to take me into Heaven, will not let me down. He will not fail me.' That was the basis of assurance for Paul.

Yet Paul had ample good works to which he could point. Paul certainly could say, 'I know I'm going to Heaven. Look how much I've suffered with the kinds of things I have been under. Look at the work I've accomplished. Look at the missions I've established. Look at the personal suffering and beatings and privations I've gone through.' His life indeed demonstrated in terms of service that this man must be born again. The problem is that a lot of those same good things that the apostle Paul did, a lot of those great humanitarian works that he performed can also be done by a cold-blooded unsaved individual. A person who is totally without regeneration can have compassion in his humanitarian way on other human beings. It is commonly done.

Lordship Salvation teachers claim that anyone professing to be saved, but who is disobedient to God's Word and does not produce the fruit of good works, does not have saving faith. They say that person is in fact lost. Let me give you a few quotations from Dr. MacArthur's book, since his book is the focus of this current discussion. In his book, "The Gospel According To Jesus" page 74, he says, "If, on the other hand, salvation is truly a work of God, it cannot be defective. It cannot fail to impact an individual's behavior. It cannot leave his desires unchanged or his conduct unaltered. It cannot result in a fruitless life." That simply is not true. You know, and I know Christians who are definitely born-again, but whose lives are fruitless. If they were suddenly removed, we wouldn't even miss them. Nobody would miss them. There are other Christians that if suddenly they were removed from our presence, we'd all be aware that they are gone. They would leave a big hole on the horizon like a giant pine tree that has been cut down on the horizon and we see that it's missing because their Christian service and their works in our presence are so great, we would indeed be aware that they are gone. But on the other hand, there are Christians who are just as born again, who are just as much going to Heaven as the serving Christian, whose lives are fruitless, whose lives maybe had been fruitful at one time, but they took a wrong turn to the compass. They got just one degree off center from positive volition to doctrine, then they started going farther and farther and farther out. We could name many people that we know in our association over the years that got off beat on one thing, and that error took them far off from the blessings and the will of God.

On page 78 Dr. MacArthur says, "Our Lord gave this young man [the rich young ruler. Our Lord gave this young man] a test. He had to choose between his possessions and Jesus Christ. He failed the test. No matter what he believed, since he was unwilling to forsake all, he could not be a disciple of Christ. Salvation is for those who are willing to forsake everything." Does that make you comfortable? Are all of you here this morning really willing to forsake everything? Now, just think of all those things you have. Just think of all those things you have at home. Just think of all those things you've accumulated since you got that job and that extra work. Just think of all that is yours because of all that extra time you put in working, are you willing to go home and say, 'I'm going to sell all this stuff and invest it in the Ministry of Berean Church? I'm going to give it all up because we need the funding. We are short of funds. We are thousands of dollars short of funds. I'm going to sell this all out, so I'll be able to make up that shortfall.' Well, on the basis of Dr. MacArthur's viewpoint, your unwillingness to do that suggests that you're not even a Christian; salvation is for those who are willing to forsake everything.

On page 84 of his book, he says, "Salvation is for people who hate their sin and want to turn away from the things of this life. It is for individuals who understand that they have lived in rebellion against the Holy God. It is for those who want to turn around to live for God's glory." Now indeed, on the surface that sounds very acceptable. That is the normal attitude of a person who comes to Christ for salvation. But it is not necessarily a consistent pattern that Christians live. The impression we are given is that this will be the consistent pattern.

On page 87 of his book, he says, "Do we literally have to give away everything we own to become Christians? No, but we do have to be willing to forsake all, Luke 14:33, meaning we cling to nothing that takes precedence over Christ. We must be eager to do whatever he asks." Now he's qualifying it, you see, a little bit. You don't have to give it all up, just the idea that you would be willing to give it all up. Now that makes it more comfortable. How many of you are willing to give up that precious thing you own that's so important to you? 'You bet. I'm willing Lord,' like the son who says, 'I'm going dad, I'll do the job,' and then he doesn't do it. But if you really had to, if somebody came and said, 'Listen, we need you to sell this thing because we're short in the offerings. We're really way short. We need you to sell this thing,' we'd find out how quickly you were willing to give it all up. Dr. MacArthur says, 'If you're not willing to give it up for the Lord, there's a question whether you're saved.'

One more, page 174, he says, "Clearly, the Biblical concept of faith is inseparable from obedience. Believe is synonymous with obey in John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life." Acts 6:7 shows how salvation was understood in the early church. 'A great many were becoming obedient to the faith.'" What he's saying there, these are all quotations about obeying the Lord. "Those who do not obey the Son will not see life." Obey Him in what respect? Obey Him in trusting Him for salvation. In what respect were people in the early New Testament times after day of Pentecost obeying God? They were flocking into obedience to Christ by trusting the Savior. That's how they were obeying Him. Lordship Salvation teachers do admit that no Christian obeys God's word continually. And no Christian will obey it continually.

He [Dr. MacArthur] compares saving faith to the spirit of childlike obedience. On Pages 177 and 178 of his book, in order to illustrate what he means by saving faith, the kind that gets you into Heaven, he says, "When Jesus wanted to illustrate the character of saving faith, He took a little child, stood him in the midst of the disciples and said, 'Truly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven.' Matthew 18:3. A child is the perfect picture of obedient humility, an object lesson about saving faith. A child is a perfect picture of obedient humility. I can think of a few who aren't. Yes, I have several dozens of them every day that I am associated with who ain't like this. A picture of obedient humility. However, after having penned that, Dr. MacArthur must have had second thoughts because he immediately put in a footnote. The footnote says, "Children, of course, do not always obey. But they're under the authority of another, and when they disobey, they are chastened." That's true. That's exactly what we free grace salvation people say. As a Christian, you must obey the Word of God. You must be faithful to the commandments of the Lord. If you don't, you're going to be chastised. If you don't, you're going to be punished by the Father until you straighten out. That's exactly the way it is. But obviously, Dr. McArthur is not suggesting that these children, when they are not humble, when they do not have a humble obedience, that they are no longer the children.

On page 178, he also says, "Faith obeys, unbelief rebels. The fruit of one's life reveals whether that person is a believer or an unbeliever. There is no middle ground." Now there, he's put it very forcefully. "The fruit of one's life reveals whether that person is a believer or an unbeliever. There is no middle ground." He's making it clear that how you live indicates whether you're going to Heaven or not. But he has some second thoughts on that. So, he has a footnote. He says, "Again, this is not to deny the obvious truth that Christians can and do fall into sin. But even in the case of a sinning believer, the spirit will operate by producing conviction, hatred for his sin and some kind of desire for obedience. The idea that a true believer can continue in unbroken disobedience from the moment of conversion without ever producing any righteous fruit whatsoever is foreign to Scripture." Now, indeed, in experience, maybe a person will not have a whole life, where he has no godly living, where he does not produce any divine good service. But that is not the basis of whether he's going to Heaven or not. That is not the basis of assurance. What has happened is after Lordship Salvation teachers take this firm position, there's no middle ground, how you show where you're going, then they have to say, 'well, generally, not always, because sometimes you may act in a way that would suggest that you're going someplace else, but you really are going to Heaven.' So, they're right back in the problem that they created for themselves, an impossible way of judging on the basis of works.

A person indeed may be associated with Jesus Christ in his religion. A lot of them are. This is the way Roman Catholics are related to Jesus Christ, in their religion. But they're not related to Him in personal salvation. They're not related to Him as the One whom they have accepted as their Savior. They are related to Him only because He's part of their religion. As a lost religious person therefore, that individual is still enslaved to his Old Sin Nature and he'll live accordingly. However, remember that the Old Sin Nature also has a good side to it and that it will produce high grade morality and it will even produce compassion, even though the person isn't saved, so that an unbeliever can act just as nice as a believer. There can be no certainty that one is truly justified in going to Heaven if we must look at the level of our obedience to God or our good works because the Old Sin Nature can produce those good works.

On page 192, Dr. MacArthur's says, "Because God is holy, those in whom he is working will progress more and more toward holiness. Because God is perfect, those in whom He dwells will move on in the direction of His perfect standard. If you are stalled or if you are slipping in the opposite direction, it is right that you examine yourself." By that he means you examine yourself as to whether you're saved or not. The Bible is very clear that Christians can be guilty of reversionism, that Christians can be guilty of being consistently out of obedience to God. The Bible is very clear that Christians can be so consistently disobedient to God that he takes their lives and takes them home to Heaven. That's called a sin unto death. He continues, "Pursuing the standard of perfection does not mean that we can never fail. It means that when we fail, we deal with it. Those with true faith will fail and in some cases frequently. But a genuine believer will, as a pattern of life, confess his sin and come to the Father for forgiveness, 1 John 1:9. Perfection is the standard. Direction is the test." That's exactly right, what he said, that's just the way it works. A Christian steps out of line; he confesses to the Father, comes back into line. But you see, he has again contradicted his basic premise: 'There's no middle ground. We know where you're going by how you live.' Then he says, "But you don't look good some time." And it's true that a Christian indwelt by the Holy Spirit is going to be under misery for that disobedience. You're not going to be able to sin and do it without a conscience unless you keep pushing it and then your conscience becomes seared. The Bible says your conscience becomes insensitive. Then you can, as a Christian, consistently do the worst kind of moral evil and it doesn't bother you. You must remember that! Your conscience can become seared like a burning iron that kills the nerve ends in the finger.

**The Meaning of James 2:14-26**

So, this is the problem that the whole picture of Lordship Salvation faces. And what we have been doing is taking you through one of the main areas of Scripture that they argue prove their point. That is James 2:14-26. We're going to review very briefly what we've said, because if you're wrong on this just a little bit, you're going to be way off course when you get down the line.

**James 2:14-26 IS NOT Talking About False Faith vs. True Faith**

The meaning of James 2 verses, 14-26, Lordship Salvation people say this: the subject of James is people who have false faith and think they're going to Heaven and they're not, over against people who have true faith and are going to Heaven. I want to tell you right up front; James is not talking about false faith against true faith. Lordship Salvation people argue that true faith is proven by your good works. I want to tell you right up front, James is not talking about how to prove your faith, that you're going to Heaven. James never suggests that. If you start reading this passage with that in your mind, that it's dealing with a false faith, false faith and true faith, at proving your salvation, not proving your salvation, you can read this passage and that's the way it seems to talk.

But that's why you have to take everything into consideration to have your frame of reference before you begin. You have to know that you're on the right chart. If you try to fly someplace on the wrong chart, you're going to go nowhere. You have to have the chart that's going to take you to your destination.

**What James 2:14-26 IS About**

The viewpoint of James: James makes it clear, as we showed you last week, that he is teaching Christians, not unbelievers. Period! You will not find any place in James where he turns and says, "Now I want to talk to you unbelievers." Every place James talks about terrible sins (And he talks about a lot of them: the gossip, and the lack of love, and the sensitiveness to people who are in dire need.), he's talking about Christians doing things like that. He is everywhere calling them "brethren." He is everywhere referring to things that they can do, like praying, which only Christians can do. He calls on believers to repent of these various sins which are destroying their temporal fellowship with God the Father, and to get back into the inner circle. You must understand that that's what James is talking about, speaking to Christians who are guilty of sinning who need to change their ways and get back into fellowship.

The main point that James makes is that Christians should obey the Bible doctrine that they have been taught. They should be the doers of the word as well as the learners. Such obedience could correct their carnal ways. James warns the believers that this will, in fact save their lives 2 ways. It will save their lives literally, their physical lives, from suffering the sin unto death at the hand of God. It will save their lives in terms of preserving the value of their days on earth, in terms of so living in service to God that they're storing treasures in Heaven for which they will be rewarded for all eternity.

Lordship Salvation people do not generally like the suggestion that some Christians in Heaven are going to have an enriched eternity that's going to be much more wonderful than some other Christian in Heaven. The Bible is very clear that all Christians will not have an equal kind of eternity. Those who have lived unto themselves, those who have zeroed in on temporal things, those who have died and gone and left it all behind them are going to be poor in Heaven. Those who have invested in eternal things, those who have sent the materials up ahead, are going to find that they have built a mansion for themselves that they will have forever. From physical death resulting from extreme persistent reversionism you will preserve your life. You will preserve your life from loss of opportunity to perform, to find good service, to earn rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

You see, if a person dies prematurely, if a person dies well before his time as a Christian, you have to face the fact that that person has lost years and years of opportunity, of living a life of service to God. The longer you live, the greater is your opportunity for storing those treasures in Heaven. So, this business of saving your life, as James speaks of it, is important. James is not talking about these people saving their lives in terms of personal salvation to enter Heaven. They already have that.

**The Book of James is NOT Written to Unbelievers**

Dr. MacArthur used James as speaking to unsaved people, and he's quite indignant over this Dallas Seminary influence in the Christian community that suggests that James is talking to Christians who are out of fellowship and who need to get their lives straightened out. In his book on page 218, he makes an interesting statement.

Turn in your Bibles to James 4:7-10 before I read this quotation. James 4:7-10, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." Now, you tell me what those verses mean! What impression do you get? Two things! Are these verses directed to a Christian, or is this the kind of talk that would be directed to an unbeliever who needs to get saved? Run your eyes over those verses? Would you go to an unbeliever and say, 'Submit yourself to God and resist the devil?' Would you go to an unbeliever and say, 'Draw near to God, He'll draw near to you?' You might if he understood what that meant. Would you go to an unbeliever and tell him to cleanse his hands you sinner, to purify his heart, his double minded attitude, the miserable and mourn and weep, let his laughter be turned to mourning, your joy to gloom? Would you tell an unsaved person to humble himself in the presence of the Lord so God can exalt him? What on earth would all that mean?

But Dr. MacArthur says that this is one of the most comprehensive invitations to salvation found anywhere in the Bible. [quoting Dr. MacArthur] "Perhaps the most comprehensive invitation to salvation in the Epistles comes in James 4:7-10. While James directs most of his epistle to genuine believers, it is also evident that he is concerned about those who are not genuine. He wants no one to be deceived regarding true salvation. So, he calls for a real living saving faith that is distinct from the dead faith of Chapter 2. He states his objective in 5:20. It is to see the sinner converted from the errors of his way and his soul saved from death. The invitation in 4:7-10 is directed at those who are not saved, guilty, wicked hearers of the word who are not doers."

James 5:20 says, "Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins." Does that sound like something that is being directed to an unsaved person in a book that's talking to Christians where we know that he uses this word save in terms of preserving and he uses the word soul in its meaning of life, preserves his life from death, and that turning a Christian from sin will indeed preserve his life and will thereby cover a multitude of his own sins? It is really hard to imagine that anybody could read James 4:7-10 and say, "It is directed at those who are not saved."

**Different Biblical Uses of "Save"**

So you see what the problem is that we're up against. Please remember that this word "saved" that is frequently used in the Book of James, "sozo," s o z o, the word "sozo," "to save," carries a variety of meanings. You should know that. It sometimes means physical healing. It sometimes means personal rescue. It sometimes means various spiritual deliverances. It sometimes means your personal preservation from Hell.

In Matthew 24:13, the word saved is used in the sense of being preserved physically alive through the judgments of the Tribulation to enter the Millennial Kingdom. Matthew 24:13, "But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved." Here is the end of Daniel's seventieth week. The Tribulation judgments are flying left and right. People are dying by the millions. And this verse says 'Those of you who endure to the end of the tribulation period, you will be saved.' Now, is that verse telling us that those of you who knuckle down and survive physically to the end of the Tribulation, in spite of all those terrible judgments of God, you managed to squeak through, you're going to be taken to Heaven because you survived the turmoil of those times? What a works salvation that would be! Obviously, that's not what it means, because the word "saved" here is talking about you will be physically preserved to go into the Millennial Kingdom.

In James 5:19-20, the word save is there being used in terms of the physical life being preserved from death, as James frequently uses it. James 5:19-20, "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns them back." Now you tell me, who do you think "My brethren" means? To whom is he speaking here when he says, "My brethren, if any of you strays from the truth,"? What truth is he talking about? The truth of biblical morality, all the commandments of Scripture. If any of you who are my brethren in Christ should stray from the truth and one other Christian comes and helps him become alert to what he's doing and to change his way to repent, confess, come back in the fellowship of Temporal Fellowship, if you do that, then he said verse 20. "Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his life from death and will cover a multitude of sins."

In Mark 3:4 you have the word save used again in the sense of preserving the physical life. Mark 3:4, And He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm; to save a life or to [What?] kill?" To save a life or to kill, you see the opposite? Save a life clearly means "keeping you alive" as the opposite is "to get you dead," to keep you alive or to kill. That's the question that he poses.

Jesus, use the words of saving a person's physical life in various metaphors that He used. You find one of those in Matthew 16:24-25. I need to illustrate for you that the word saved does not only refer to being saved from Hell. Matthew 16:24-25, "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it." Obviously, He's using the word "save" in terms of whoever wishes to save his life, keep himself alive and indulge his own life, he's going to lose it. What's he going to lose? He's going to lose the value of his life in terms of eternal rewards. "But whoever loses his life [loses it how?] for My sake shall find it." That is, even in a physical way if you lose your life as a martyr. Mark 8:34-37, Luke 9:23-25 have the same idea, Jesus using the word "save" of physical life in these metaphors.

It is interesting that in the translation of the Old Testament Hebrew Bible into Greek, which is called the Septuagint Version, the word for preserving physical life that is referred to in several passages is translated by this word "sozo." In Genesis 19:17, Genesis 32:30, 1 Samuel 19:11, Psalm 109:31, Jeremiah 48:6, in all those passages they speak about saving a life in terms of physical protection.

In James 1:21 he uses the word save them in terms of your physical life. Notice James 1:21. James says, "Therefore putting aside all filthiness." Is he talking to Christians? Yep. You know any filthy Christians. Have you ever been out with Christians who are used to swearing, but when they're not with you, they don't do that until they forget themselves? I don't know how many times I've had Christians turn red in the face when they forget themselves and start talking the way they do when the preacher is not around. And it can be pretty filthy. "Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls." And James is clearly saying obedience to doctrine will save your physical life. He is using the word here clearly in terms of saving your soul.

**The Healing Power of Bible Doctrine**

Let me show you something that struck me this week. When I was down at the administrators' conference at Galveston last week, I attended a couple of sessions with a group that calls itself "The Rapha Group." The Rapha Group is a group that deals with Christian oriented psychotherapy and counseling programs. It is based upon Freudian concepts. One of the first things that the instructor told us at the first session was 'Every one of you people in this room has had 4 distinct false ideas implanted in you by your parents. And these 4 distinct false ideas are causing you trouble, whether you know it or not.' Now folks, that's Freudian, that my mother did not change my diaper so that the rash has caused an internal trauma that every time I see something red like these rugs, I get the same reaction as I did from my diaper. And I just had this emotional upset, this mental trauma. That's what they're talking about. Maybe sometime I'll tell you what the 4 were. But right now that's irrelevant. The whole point was that this group is based upon that idea and they said what you must do is tear those 4 false ideas out of your mind. Then they demonstrated to us how they did it and talked to us how they did all this. Well, interestingly enough, they said that their name was this, they called themselves The Rapha Group because this comes from the Hebrew word "rapha," which means "healer." And in Exodus, let's turn to that, Exodus 15:26, this is where they take this word from. Exodus 15:26. And they pointed this verse out to us. At the end of the verse it says, "for I, the LORD, am your Rapha," 'I am Jehovah Rapha.' 'I am the LORD, your healer.'

It didn't strike me then. I wish it had, but it did the other day. As I was thinking about that conference and what they had said. I remembered what the first part of the verse in Exodus said, which tells us how God is our healer, and He's talking about physical well-being. Look what the first part says, "And He said." This is upon the Jews, the Exodus generation. They crossed out of Egypt; they crossed the Red Sea. Now they have freedom. And God says 'I want to tell you something. I want you to understand that I'm going to give you a lot of directions, a lot of commandments. I'm going to very shortly give you a code of laws. I'm going to give you a moral code. And I want you to understand how important this is to you physically. I'm going to teach you principles, spiritual principles of doctrine, of how you relate to Me as a righteous holy God. And I want you to understand that this is related to your physical well-being.' Verse 26, "And He said, 'If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your [Rapha. I, the LORD, am your] healer.'" Healing in what way? How can I get emotional healing? How can I get mental healing if I've got a problem in that area? By obedience to Bible doctrine, by learning the principles of doctrine which give the principles of human relationships on a human level and from man to God.

People who know doctrine, people who practice doctrine are people who have the best physical health. And there's a great deal of physical illness that comes because you've got mental traumas and mental disruption and emotional disruptions because you're in violation of the principles of the Word of God. So, these people don't know how their very name contradicts their Freudian basis of their concepts of how Christians should deal and get them with their emotional and mental problems and get themselves straightened out. Doctrine is not just a little indifferent thing. It is the medicine of God, not only for your soul, but it reacts as well upon your physical well-being.

In the Book of James in the very first Chapter, I want to show you something that James says. James 1:13-15, James refers to the death dealing consequences of violating doctrine, the death dealing consequences of sinfulness. James 1:13-14, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust." Don't blame God for the evil you do. Don't say He made me do it. You are carried away by your own sin nature. Verse 15, "Then when lust [the sin nature] has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin [that is overt sin] is accomplished, it brings forth death. The Sin Nature says, "Violate a principle of Scripture. God says, "Do this." Ignore it, don't do that. God says, "Don't do that." Go ahead and do it. The Word of God says, "You do that you will sin. The result of sin will be death. Your physical being will be corroded.

He gives the antidote to this kind of death in verse 21: "Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls." The antidote to sin is the life-giving effects of doctrine functioning in the soul. So, the Book of James is talking about saving your life physically. It's talking about saving your life in terms of its potential value of storing treasures in Heaven. The Book of James is not talking about saving your life in terms of coming to a relationship of regeneration to go into Heaven. The Book of James does not talk to unsaved people. The Book of James does not talk anywhere to unsaved people. The Book of James is talking to Christians who are out of step with God the Father, who are out of temporal fellowship. And the consequences of continuing in that will be enormous upon them emotionally, mentally, and physically.

In James 2:14-26, we will look at the details of what God through James has to say to the people that he's writing to, to try to straighten out their lives for their own temporal and eternal well-being. And what he says to them I can assure you applies to us.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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