***Obedient Christian Service (James 2)
Romans 15:30-33
RO195-02***

**© Berean Memorial Church of Irving, Texas, Inc. (1977)**

Paul's Appeal For Prayer Support - Segment Number 11, Romans 15:30-33. We have concluded this section.

**The Book of James Is Written to Believers**

The Book of James, which was written by the half-brother of Jesus, has suffered greatly at the hands of various interpreters. The basic question relative to this book is whether James is speaking to believers or to unbelievers. You have a great diversity of opinion on that. Some very good teachers of the Word say its believers; other good teachers of the Word say it is unbelievers. Whichever decision you make will have an enormous result and where you will come out in dealing with this book and its significance to you personally. Those who believe that a born-again person can lose his salvation on the basis of his sinful acts, say that James is writing to believers. They say yes, James is telling you that if you don't behave yourself as a Christian, God is going to take His salvation back away from you. Those who do not believe that one can lose his salvation say that James is speaking to unsaved people who think they are saved. He is speaking to people who have a false faith and their false faith is confirmed by their works, their lack of godliness, their lack of Christian service. So, here you have a distinct difference: believers who will lose their salvation, people who think they say to never had salvation.

But James makes it repeatedly clear, if you've been with us regularly now on these Sunday mornings, we have carefully taken you through this book and shown you that in various places, in various ways, James makes it clear he is speaking to born again Christians. Whatever else he is saying, you cannot deny that. He is talking to people who are going to Heaven. He never indicates that some of the people he is talking to are unsaved. Please get that. He never indicates that he stops and says, 'I want to talk to you people who aren't believers.' He never does that anywhere. Throughout the book, he's talking only to Christians. Therefore, we must interpret what he says according to the principle that is confirmed elsewhere, such as by Paul, that a Christian comes into eternal life by Free Grace Salvation, a gift of the acceptance of God's eternal life that is eternally secure.

James is writing to Christians, who are not dealing with various sins that have cropped up in their lives. They are not repenting, and they are not making their confession to God the Father. That's what James is dealing with: Christians who are out of temporal fellowship, Christians who are not walking according to the Word of God. So, these people are saved, but they are carnal. They're out of temporal fellowship. James wants Christians to practice the Bible doctrine they know and to live daily as spiritual believers, which means their sins are confessed. James wants these Christians to maintain a lifestyle of divine good works so that God may reward them at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

So, what James is dealing with is the vitality of a Christian faith's as revealed in his daily experience, the vitality of a Christian's faith as strengthened by his daily experience. James is not speaking to people who have never been saved because they had something that is called a dead faith. The only kind of faith you can have that is dead is that you've got it in the wrong object, like your church, or you have a faith that's dead because you have it in a wrong plan of salvation.

James is writing to Christian brothers, then, who need to maintain divine good works under the power of the Holy Spirit in order to keep their faith in Christ alive or active so that it will be productive of divine good treasures in Heaven. James says a living faith in a Christian can die without good works to exercise it. That's what James is saying. Your living faith in Christ can die without good works to exercise it, faith that is unto Christian service, not faith unto salvation. Your living faith unto salvation can never die, but your faith unto good works can die.

James never says that faith without works is not faith in Christ. Please understand that. James never says that faith without works is not genuine faith in Christ. Christians need, indeed, to maintain a life of divine good works within God's plan for them in order to keep their faith active and operational.

Your faith in Christ can degenerate, you see, to mere dead creed, an orthodox belief that you stand for without acting upon it. Good works through the Holy Spirit is the secret of a vital faith in Jesus Christ that will animate what you believe. It is your active Christian service that puts legs to your creed.

James never uses the word save, and I must now reiterate that again. Be sure that you've understood what we went over so carefully last week. Let me put it in a positive way. James, when he uses the word saved, he uses it in terms of preserving the potential value of a believer's physical life or storing treasures in Heaven. James talks about being saved. James talks about saving your life not unto Heaven. He's talking to people who already have that. But he says 'you Christians, you're going to waste your life. You Christians are going to be sorry someday with what you did with your lives if you don't get something straightened up.' He is talking about saving it for productive rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. James talks about saving one's physical life indeed from death, by obedience to doctrine. And doctrine will maintain a high quality of physical well-being as well as emotional stability. Obedience of a Christian to Bible doctrine does provide him with good physical health and with stability in his soul. The reason for that is that when you obey doctrine, you're doing things right. You have the right emotions, the right mental attitude. And when you are emotionally and mentally stable, you do not tear up your physical structure. The Bible makes it very clear that when you are not operating on doctrine, you tear up your physical structure. Therefore, James indeed, in that respect, does talk about saving your physical life. But he is not using the word saved basically in the sense of going to Heaven. He is speaking of saving, which is not the result of believing in Christ, but a saving which is the result of Christian service.

Now, this is where we come to our difference with Lordship Salvation teachers, who interprets James as saying that he is appealing to false professors of salvation, people who think they're saved but are not saved, because they have a false faith. James is not talking to those who think they're saved but are not. James is talking to Christians who have a carnal lifestyle. James is calling this to their attention because they're going to Heaven and if they don't change, they're going to miss out on something very wonderful when they get to Heaven.

Free Grace Salvation teachers recognize the biblical teaching that personal salvation depends on trusting in Jesus Christ to save one with no added promises or intentions. Lordship Salvation teachers look for assurance of salvation in your godly lifestyle and in your good works. People thus, of course, can never be sure that they have believed with saving faith because they're not sure how far they can fall into sin and still not be demonstrating that they never were saved in the first place.

**Faith Without Works Is Dead... In Terms of Rewards**

So, open your Bibles to James 2 in that dramatic section of James 2:14-26, which is the great theological ground of debate. I asked you to be sure that you kept in your Bible a handout of a paraphrase of this section. If you do not have that with you, if you left it at home, we have a few here. Please raise your hand and Mr. Newman will give you one? Mr. Newman, please give me one too. All the people who have your hands up if you come to church regularly, you would not have to be putting your hands up now. You may have to share them, but you do need this.

OK. We're looking at the meaning of James 2:14-26. We have covered this in some detail, some of it. We're going to run through it. You must understand this.

**James 2:14**

Verse 14, James says, "What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" Here you have a Christian who claims that he has faith in Jesus Christ, but his life is not a life of divine good works in God's service. Such an inactive faith, James says, is dead relative to what? Now, you can make the conclusion! You've already been given the background briefing. Obviously, he's not saying your faith is dead relative to your salvation, relative to your justification before God, relative to your going to Heaven. Obviously, he's talking about your faith being dead and in reference to something else and that something else is the value of your life for earning rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ you're wasting your life. What James says in verse 14 is 'what the use my brethren, if you say you have faith in Christ, but you have no works? Can that faith save?' And there he uses the word save the way he's using it in this book. Can that faith "preserve" the value of your life? Indeed, you may carry that, can that inactive faith, ensure that God will keep you alive? James also says, later on, you can go to the extent where the sin unto death has been committed; you've gone too far and God takes you home to Heaven before your time.

So, James 2:14 puts before us immediately his main thesis. He says, "I want to talk to you Christians who are living like the devil in various actions of sin. You are ignoring the principles of doctrine. You are disobedient to God, and you are not producing divine good works. Your faith is not productive for your own eternal reward."

**James 2:15-16**

James 2:15-16, he goes on and says, "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?" It is useless. Now he goes to give an illustration of his main point. He says it's useless to wish your brother well, who is destitute of food and clothing without providing for those needs. What good is it for you to tell 'brother be warmed?'

I kept doing that on the bus yesterday. I said, 'boys and girls, be warm.' But those who had their shorts on could not be warm. You should see how quickly they went into the gas stations on the rest breaks and came back out, how quickly they went into McDonald's and came back out. But I wished all of them to be warm and I gave them my blessing be warm. But the thing I didn't give them was long pants. That's what they needed. And the dudes who wore Tank-shirts, oh, did they ever have a wonderful time? Be warm brother! But I didn't give them my jacket. So, what good did my well-wishing do to these people without the adequate clothing that they needed?

Without this provision here in James's illustration, these brothers are going to die. So, James makes it very clear with this illustration that he's talking about saving physical life in some respect, the actual life or its value, something you can do with your physical life. Encouraging words are not going to meet the needs of a destitute brother. It requires the action of works on your part in his behalf to save him.

**James 2:17**

Then in verse 17, he sums up and he says, "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." So, a Christian's inactive faith is all talk and no show. James refers to a functionally dead faith, inactive in terms of its works. Faith by itself is dead in the sense that it is useless in helping people if we don't act upon it.

A lot of Christians are useless in terms of helping other people. They're useless in terms of opening the doors to Heaven for these people by giving them the gospel. They're useless in terms of demonstrating the qualities of a Christian life.

What we talked about with our young people on the campout was God's honor code, as expressed in the 10 principles of the moral code of the Ten Commandments. Those kids were sharp. They caught innumerable implications that these principles, these moral principles, would give them personal freedom and personal well-being if they were obedient to them and they would be destructive if they didn't. And how shoddy it would be to claim that I am a Christian and that I believe in this living God who has given me this code to live by, and then I don't live according to that.

What kind of faith is that? What kind of good things is that going to produce? Don't kid yourself. I'd suggest you not go and testify to a brother that you won't pay a bill to who it happens is not a Christian. You want to lead him to the Lord. You've stolen from him; you violated his moral code, the moral code of God. I wouldn't go to somebody that you have abused in some way because you have treated him in a hateful way and now you want to testify to him; you want to talk about Christianity and what God has done for you. You've already committed murder. Stay out of it.

This is a serious business James says, you people who say you have faith. And the word "faith" here can be viewed as "the body of beliefs," that's what it means. It means the body of true biblical beliefs based upon the moral foundation of a code like the Ten Commandments. So, you have a code of beliefs, do you? But you have no works that are compatible with that code of beliefs. Just who do you think you are? You've got a dead faith.

Does that mean, did he say you're not going to Heaven because you violate that code? No, he didn't say that! He said you are not going to be productive of things that God will reward you for some day. You see, you break a moral code, and you never make it right, you never make the restitution, you never make the confession, you never make the accommodation that needs to be made to what you did to the person that you're involved with, and you're wasting your whole life. I don't care what you're doing, what you think you're doing for the Lord, as long as you're out of that inner circle of temporal fellowship, there are no good results. You have to go back and say, I've got to fix this. I've got to make this right. I've got to straighten this out, then I'm back inside.

This is what irritated James. You had a group of people who are all talk and no show, and they even talked themselves into thinking that they were OK with God. James is trying to jar them loose and say you're wasting your life and I don't want you to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ and say 'James why didn't you alert us? Why didn't you hit us a little harder so that we could be downwind of ourselves and smell ourselves as God smells us?' This is no reference to dead faith relative to the saving of the soul, but dead faith relative to divine good work production.

Doctor Zane Hodges, one of the all-time great quarter of a century teacher at Dallas Seminary, has written a book entitled "Dead Faith." What is in it? He gives us this superb paraphrase of these verses, James 2:14-17. You can follow them in the handout. He says, "What good does it do, my Christian brothers, if someone among you says he has faith and yet does not act on that faith. Faith certainly cannot preserve his life, now, can it? It would be the same thing as if one of you spoke to some Christian brother or sister who is destitute of the necessities of life. You said, 'go home peacefully and get warmed and filled.' But if you did not give them the very things they need for bodily life, what good would it do? Would their lives be saved by your confident words? In the same way, when faith stands all by itself because you fail to act on it, your inactive faith is as dead as your useless words to your destitute Christian brother. It has no life preserving power at all."

**James 2:18-19**

In verses 18-19, James then resorts to a speaking technique which is used in the ancient world, a technique where he imagines that some objector has stood up in the meeting and has pointed his finger and raised an objection. So, James stops talking to the people that he's writing to, and he turns, and he looks at this objector and he tells what the objector says and then he gives the answer back to this objection. What he is going to do in this way is bring up what people are going to bring up about what he's teaching. He is bringing up the objection that he expects them to bring up.

James 2:18, "But someone [this objector] may well say, 'You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works and I will show you my faith by my works.' You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder." James addresses this imaginary objector; someone is going to object to what he has said about faith and works. It's an ancient way of arguing.

The apostle Paul used the same technique, very effective. Let me give you an example. For example, in 1 Corinthians 15:35-36, Paul uses this imaginary objector technique. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:35 "But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised" And with what kind of body do they come?' You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies;" Someone comes up and says, 'Oh sure, you talk about resurrection, but we know that the body dies, and it goes into dust. How is it going to be raised?' Paul says, 'You really are a fool. You don't understand. You're dealing with the creator God, who made you, who could easily put you together; and He most certainly will. In fact, don't you even know that in nature you put a seed in the ground? How does it come to life? It dies and germinates. Out of the death of that seed, it becomes a fertilizer for the germination of a new life. So, Paul says, God takes you as a Christian, he sows you in the grave. You're His seed that's going to burst forth into the grandest life you can ever imagine.

Paul uses the same technique in Romans 9:19-20. Romans 9:19, "You will say to me then [an imaginary objector], 'Why does he still find fault? For who resists His will?' [Answer.] On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this?' will it?" Here, Paul is saying that God has a purpose. He is sovereign. He makes the decisions. He guides us. He directs us. This Jewish objector who doesn't want to receive Jesus Christ as savior, says, 'Well, then why do you find fault with us if God is in charge, the fact that we won't accept Christ as savior? What's wrong with God?' And Paul says, 'Just who do you think you are O man, to object to what God has brought into your life, and how God is dealing with you, and that you, you piece of clay that the potter, who is God, has the right to make as He chooses. And because He is God, because He is perfect, every decision He makes for you, unpleasant as it may be at some point in time, is perfect for you. It is exactly what He is honoring you with in your life at that point in time.' Paul says, 'Are you going to say to the potter who is in supreme command, I don't like the way you made me, I don't like my shape, I don't like where I'm going, I don't like what my situation is?'

See, this is that way of the ancient technique and it's still used today: bring up an imaginary objector, present his objection, give the answer. A lot of people out there who are listening had this same objection in mind; now they have the answer.

So, here in James the objector says this - you cannot take what you believe and show it by some action. That's all he's saying. He says, 'James you're wrong, you can't show what you believe by what you do.' He also argues that you cannot take your works and show what you believe. The objector rejects James' claim that there is a dynamic relationship between faith and works in the Christian life. The objector rejects the argument that belief in the unity of God can be shown by one's conduct. The objector says 'Let me give you an example. How about monotheism? You're trying to tell me that because you believe in monotheism, you're going to act in a certain way. And the objector says 'The demons believe in monotheism. They don't act right. They're only afraid of God. They're fearful of His authority.' So, the objector says, "Don't tell me that because you believe something, you're going to act in a certain way.'

Lordship Salvation teachers say that these 2 verses, 18-19, deal with a person's salvation from Hell. Lordship Salvation teachers say that if you have real saving faith, you will show it by your works. And do you see how out of keeping that would be with everything else that James has been talking about up to now about using your life for Christian service for ultimate eternal rewards? It has nothing to do with salvation. Is salvation ever called a reward in the Bible? No, salvation is not a reward. A reward is something you earn, something you deserve for something you've done. That's why any time you have this idea of receiving something as a benefit from God or in terms of reward, it is something that has to be apart from salvation.

No one is saved by believing in monotheism. Do you see how foolish it is to say that this deals with salvation? Do you know anywhere in the Bible that says you'll be saved if you believe that there's only one God? Do you realize that one of the great pharaohs of Egypt of ancient times came to the conclusion, by logical thinking, there cannot be all these different gods that we worship, there has to be only one person who has the power to do what we have seen here? And he shredded the whole religious system of Egypt and he became the pharaoh who promoted faith in one god. They believed in monotheism. Did it take them to Heaven? No, because they did not have the information about the true God. That pharaoh came up that close, that he knew that there was, his logical conclusion, one true God, one God only. But he did not understand what this God was like. He did not understand how to relate himself to that God for eternal life. And as soon as he was dead, the priests wiped out monotheism.

What do the Jews believe in today? Are the Jews monotheistic? You bet your bippy they are. They are extremely monotheistic. Are the Jews going to Heaven because they believe in one God? They certainly are not! It is the very fact that they do not understand that that Godhead includes Jesus Christ, that they are going to end up in the Lake of Fire.

So, in Dr. Hodges paraphrase of verses 18-19, you may follow it in your handout, it says, "But someone is going to say, all right then, let's say that you have correct beliefs and I have correct actions. Go right ahead. Take some belief of yours and make it visible by means of your actions. If you can do that, but of course you can't, then I will take my actions and will make my beliefs visible through them, utterly impossible. Oh, I know, you'll claim that your faith in the unity of God is demonstrated by your good conduct. I disallow that claim. The demons also believe the same thing you believe, and they don't do good. They only tremble."

**James 2:20**

In verse 20, James goes on, "But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?" James, here, calls the objector foolish to claim that one's works do not indicate something about what one believes. A faith in Christ which does not produce divine good works, James says is inactive or dead. The objector says 'No, there's no connection between the two. An inactive faith results in the loss of rewards for believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

None of this imaginary discourse, I want you to note, has anything to do with eternal justification unto Heaven. "But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?" You can believe something and then your beliefs don't affect your actions? What good is it to believe that? Is he talking about salvation? No, the context makes clear that this has nothing to do with salvation. James says faith without the sustaining energy of good works, will die. But the objector foolishly does not want to admit this. Please remember that.

The objector doesn't prove anything. He just says, 'I don't like to hear that kind of thing. You realize what it makes me feel like when you say that my faith as a Christian, being inactive and unproductive, is wasting my life, whereas all these people over here using their life in production for the living God are earning enormous treasures in Heaven and I am not. I don't like to hear that kind of talk.' Well do you think that's going to change the effect of the truth, because you don't hear it? But many Christians are just like that: I don't like to hear that kind of talk; I don't like to hear you say that. 'I don't like to have you draw this picture so clearly,' is what the objector is saying to James, 'so that you put me in all kinds of misery because I want to live my own life. I want to do my own thing. I don't want to think that I have to be the servant of the most-high God or I'm a zilch, zero, nothing.' But James says that happens to be the way it is.

**James 2:21-22 - The Example of Abraham**

And then in verse 21, James proceeds to illustrate his point, and he uses the all-time great person of the Jewish people, Abraham. He says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?" James uses Abraham in the sacrifice of Isaac to illustrate that a person is justified by his works. James 2:22 says "You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected." The justification by works for rewards from God, please remember, came to Abraham long after his justification by faith unto salvation from Hell. This is clearly stated in the Bible.

At the very beginning of Abraham's experience recorded in Genesis, we are told that God told him, 'I'm going to bring a Savior Messiah, He will come through a line of descendants that I'm going to bring from you. He will be the Savior who will cover your sin in fulfillment of my promise to Adam and Eve, and He will also be the atonement for the sins of all Gentiles.' "And Abraham believed God," the Bible says, "and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Years and years and years went by and finally, something like 25 years after God said, 'your wife's going to have a baby boy who will be your channel for these blessings that I'm going to bring, he will be the line of this nation that will descend from you.'

Abraham is pushing 100 years of age. Sarah is not too far behind, and Abraham keeps believing God. Suddenly indeed, Isaac is born. Everybody is euphoric. Things are wonderful. The years move ahead. Isaac crosses out of the 12-year-olds into the teen age bracket. And suddenly God comes to him and says, 'I want you to take this beautiful 13-year-old boy you have and I want you to sacrifice him to me, just like you see the Canaanites doing here all the time, sacrificing people. Make this altar, go to this place and sacrifice him to Me.'

That is the picture that James takes to show us that Abraham now had to demonstrate something about his faith. Was this willingness to sacrifice Isaac going to establish faith unto eternal life in Heaven for Abraham? No, he already had that, years and years before. But it was going to do something else very important. The justification by works for rewards is what Abraham is now facing. Abraham's faith in the coming Messiah Savior is now going to be expressed in his obedience to God; and as a result of that, his faith was perfected, that is matured. Abraham's justification before God by faith unto salvation expressed itself now as justification before men, through his works, through his willingness to sacrifice the son. There was a dynamic interrelationship between his faith unto salvation in Heaven and his works.

**James 2:23 - Obedient Works Mature Faith**

Abraham's works, furthermore we're told, confirmed that he was on the most intimate terms with the creator God verse. Verse 23, "and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,' and he was called the friend of God." All the pagans feared God. None of them looked upon God as a friendly individual. Whoever was out there, they feared in desperation. They considered Him mean and cruel and vindictive. But Abraham was on the buddy-buddy terms with the living creator God.

A Christian's faith expressed in his works, bring spiritual maturity, and confirms friendship with God. John 15:14, John 14:21-23, Jesus says, you Christians who are obedient to the Word of God and express your faith in Christ through your good works are His friends. Abraham's faith had generated obedient activity and that obedient activity matured his faith. Do you think that Abraham had greater confidence in God after he finished going through the procedure of preparing to sacrifice Isaac and then being stopped in mid-air with a knife? That's going to increase your faith a whole lot. Whatever faith and confidence Abraham had in God before, it was multiplied many times, I guarantee you, after that experience. And the next time you're up against having to act upon your faith and seeing that indeed God comes through, you will discover that he becomes infinitely more real to you. You become aware of the fact that out of the corner of your eye, you can see the living God walking beside you. You become aware that he really is there. Why? Because you acted upon your faith in Christ by the works that were appropriate to the expression of that faith. If Abraham had not obeyed in proceeding to sacrifice Isaac, his faith would have become weaker. When you do not use a muscle, it becomes weak.

James, by this example, shows us as Christians that he is dealing with post justification unto salvation from Hell. He is not dealing with justification for salvation. He's dealing with justification after Abraham already has it. Abraham's salvation is never in question, no matter how he would respond to God.

For us as Christians, the application is that our faith and justification before God can be matured by being expressed in obedience to doctrine and to good works. Failure to grow in faith through obedience will produce spiritual calluses on your soul and you'll spin off into reversionism. A non-serving faith is indeed a sign of reversionism, but it is not a sign that you're not going to Heaven. Did you get that? A non-serving faith, a disobedient Christian, is a sign of a Christian who's in reversionism. It's not a sign of Christian who is on his way to the Lake of Fire.

Dr. Hodges paraphrased the verses 20-23 to read like this "O senseless man, do you really want to know that faith is genuinely dead without works? Take our father Abraham as an example. Isn't it obvious that he was vindicated by his works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? Can't you see for yourself that his faith was cooperating with his works and his faith was actually matured by those works? And was not all this an appropriate fulfillment of the divine declaration by which he was originally vindicated in God's sight? For the Scripture says, 'That Abraham believed God and was accounted to Him for righteousness.' But now, in offering up his own son, this original divine acceptance of Abraham was substantiated and verified in the eyes of men who appropriately called him the friend of God." So, you see, there is a justification before God that comes by faith in Christ. But there is a justification in the eyes of men, which comes by your obedience to doctrine and your performance of the works of God.

**James 2:24 - Two Kinds of Justification**

Then in verse 24, James says "You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone." You must really understand this verse. "You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone." James says in this verse that there are 2 kinds of justifications: one which comes by faith, and one which comes by works.

James now turns from speaking to his imaginary objector, by the way, he goes back to speaking to his readers; and you can tell that in the Greek text. He now turns back, not from speaking in the singular to an individual, to speaking to a group of people.

Justification before God is by faith, justification before men is by works. Now notice, James does not say that there is a justification by works and faith combined. This verse does not say that there is a justification which is the result of faith plus works. James does not say that one's salvation is confirmed by one's works. It doesn't say that either. James never says that justification by faith cannot exist apart from justification, by works. Justification by faith results in salvation unto eternal life in Heaven. Justification by works results in rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Justification by faith in Christ gives one a standing of absolute righteousness before God. While justification by works exercises one's faith in Christ and gives him a standing of friendship with God before people.

In verse 24, you see that word "alone" at the end of the verse. In the Greek sentence, that word (I don't want to get too technical. Let me tell you this.), it's an adverb, and adverbs have to modify verbs. (Probably you know that.) In verse 24, this word "alone" cannot justify the word "faith," because the word alone is neuter. The word "faith" is feminine. In the Greek Bible, "alone" would have to be feminine so that it could modify a feminine word like faith. You see? You can't see this from the English, but in the Greek, this is a neon sign. So, you know that that word "alone" is not talking about faith alone as if you must have works also. So, what this means is that a person is justified not only by a means of justification by faith, but that there is also in the word "alone," means "not alone one kind of justification." You see, the word "alone" goes with the word "justified." "You see that a man is not justified only by the justification of works or only by the justification of faith." There are 2 kinds of justifications, and that's what that verse is saying.

The idea is this. "You see then that a man is justified by works and not only justified by faith." That's all he's saying. "You see then that a person is justified by works and not only justified by faith." Abraham was justified by his works, but not in God's sight, only before people.

Romans 4:2, I must read that to you because somebody is going to say, 'Oh yes. This verse says, "That he was justified by works."' Romans 4:2 says, "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God." But if Abraham was justified by works and he was, he's got something to boast about because he justified himself, but he doesn't have that boasting before God. You see, this was not the justification that brought him eternal life. So, you have a justification as a Christian that is before God because of your trust in Christ. But you're not going to be justified as a Christian who claims to be what you claim to be in Christ except by your works. And if your works violate the moral code of God, if your works are disobedient to God, if your works act in a way that people recoil away from you in disgust, you are not being justified in their sight. They will say to you, "You call yourself a Christian!" "What kind of a Christian is that?" You know, all the phrases. What are people telling you? They're saying that in our sight, by what you are doing, you're not justified in our sight as a person who's going to Heaven.

Justification by faith can exist without justification, by works. That's what James is saying. You can have one without the other. A person can be saved and not show it by serving God.

**James 2:25 - Works Exhibit Justification**

Verse 25, James uses the example of Rahab being justified in the eyes of the Hebrew spies. "And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?" Here he is reiterating his basic point, which he had in James 2:17, "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." Rahab had a born-again faith in God, and it produced the good work of protecting the spies from the King of Jericho. James never says that Rahab was justified by her faith in God and her works together, does it? It says that she had a justification of a certain kind by works. Her good work was the product of her faith in God, and it saved her life. Hebrews 11:31 tells us that. She was justified in whose eyes by the work she did... in the eyes of the spies. She was justified at the point when she actually told the king 'No, they were here. They didn't go that way.' Which they did. 'They went that way.' Which they didn't. Yes, she lied; it was a time of war, and you don't give the enemy any advantage. She sent them off chasing rabbits. When she did that, the spies had already told her, 'We will know at that point whether you mean to be true to us. And if you do that, you put a scarlet cord, hang it out your window. And when the walls of Jericho fall and we come charging in, everybody will be alerted that that scarlet cord marks the home of Rahab. And all who are in that home with her will be safe from death.'

In whose eyes was she justified that preserved her life... in the sight of those spies, because of her work. That had nothing to do with her being justified unto eternal life in Heaven. Joshua 2:17-21 you can read that story. She is a classic role model for Christians who are already justified to be justified before men by their works.

**James 2:26 - Divine Good Works Keep Faith Active**

In verse 26, he ties it up. "For just as the [human] body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." James closes with the analogy of a human body out of which the human spirit has been removed. "Faith" here is compared to the body, "works" to the human spirit. When the human spirit leaves the body, that body is inert, it's dead, it does nothing. When a Christian has faith that is inactive, it's like the human spirit leaving a body. Works have left Faith. Divine good works keeps one's faith in Christ active and the human spirit keeps the body active. James is speaking to Christians. He's talking about their faith as a creed, as a doctrinal belief. An inactive faith in terms of divine good works degenerates into a dead creed of beliefs. Good works makes your creed alive.

So, a dead faith, that is one without works, can exist in a Christian, with his loss of rewards for his service, but not of his loss of salvation in Heaven. James does not say that one's faith makes one active in good works. Did you see that? James doesn't say that your faith makes you active in good works. That's what Lordship Salvation people are saying. What James says is that your works will keep your faith alive and active and functioning; and the next time you come up against a crisis in life, because you have kept your faith operational through obedience to the Word of God and through your good works, you will have a faith that's strong enough to take in stride what has come into your life.

James has pointed out the deadly consequences of sin verses in James 1:13-15. This consequence of sin, the death consequences, can be avoided by being a doer of God's word, he says in James 1:21-25.

People do not commit themselves to what they do not believe. Faith in the truth cannot preserve you from evil consequences unless you believe it. Faith in the truth cannot preserve you from evil consequences unless you believe it.

The first time my number 3 son, my number one daughter, and one of my nieces and I decided to float the Rio Grande River many years ago, we knew nothing about it. We had a considerably smaller raft than we had the other day. We got a little bit of briefing from the people on the site at Lajitas, at the trading post. They showed us a picture and said, 'Here's how you go through the rapids. Zip, zip, this rock, this rock, this rock.' But they also said 'It's very dangerous. You've got to do it right.' We believed it was dangerous. We got in the river and we started down. And suddenly we were hitting rapids and I'd say to Paul, 'Okay, Paul read this one. Where is the slick? Where do we hit it? Watch the foam, that's the rock over there.' And every time we'd get in right. And we'd get caught in the rapids and we'd zip through smooth as silk. We believed that the rock pile was dangerous. We had to take action on that belief. We could have ignored and said, 'Let's just paddle through.' Or we could have said, 'Let's just take this thing out of the water and have a portage here and let's carry over.' Well, that's easier said than done. Once you see this enormous rock pile, it's a terrible job. It took us a good hour, an hour-and-a-half. But we pulled that raft out and we walked over these huge boulders, struggling, and pushing this raft, until we got past the kick out point where the final whirlpool is. We later found that there was a path right up around the mountain, right there a little path you can walk up and down the other side. But nobody told us that. So, we did it the hard way.

I told that to our boatman the other day and he said, 'You were very wise in doing that without experience in this rapid. It was a better course of wisdom not to be too proud to have a portage, and to carry your raft across.'

We could have not believed what we felt was the truth. We could have not believed it by being foolish enough to try to run something hazardous that we were inexperienced in, that could have been disastrous to do. That's all that James is saying. People, faith alone in truth, will not preserve you from evil consequences unless you do the truth.

**Conclusion**

Dr. Hodges paraphrases Verses 24-26. And incidentally, that's a misprint. It should be Verses 24-26 on your handout. He says, "In conclusion then, as you all can see, a man can be vindicated by works as well as being vindicated by faith. To illustrate, was not Rahab the prostitute obviously vindicated by her works when she actively aided the spies to escape? Isn't that how she herself survived when everybody else in her city died? The point is plain. When Christian faith is disconnected from our works, it has no more vitality and life preserving power than does a corpse which has been disconnected from its dynamic life-giving spirit.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)