



WHAT doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? ¹⁷ Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. ¹⁸ Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. ¹⁹ Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. ²⁰ But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? ²² Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. ²⁴ Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. ²⁵ Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? ²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (James 2:14-26)

When Martin Luther set out on the work which shook the world his friend Myconius expressed sympathy. "But," he said, "I can best help where I am. I will remain and pray while you toil." Myconius prayed day by day, but as he prayed he began to feel uncomfortable. One night he had a dream. He thought the Saviour himself approached and showed him his hands and feet. He saw the fountain in which he had been cleansed from sin. Then looking earnestly into his eyes the Saviour said, "Follow me." The Lord took him to a lofty mountain and pointed eastward. Looking in that direction Myconius saw a plain stretching away to the horizon. It was dotted with white sheep—thousands and thousands of them. One man was trying to shepherd them all. The man was Luther. The Saviour pointed Westward. Myconius saw a great field of standing corn. One reaper was trying to harvest it all. The lonely laborer was spent and exhausted, but still he persisted in his task. Myconius recognized in the solitary reaper his old friend Luther. "It is not enough," said Myconius when he awakened, "that I should pray. The sheep must be shepherded; the fields must be reaped. Here am I; send me." And he went out and shared his old friend's labors" —The Fiery Crags, by Boreham - Knight's Master Book of New Illustrations

The illustration above reveals the sharp difference in those (many of the modern caste) theologians who differ on the argument of work, or faith. It is really a red herring to draw a distinct difference for it cannot be done in all truth. Are we saved by works? Not at all – no one who is acquainted with the atoning death of our Lord and Savior could

believe that. Then are we saved by a faith that bears no fruit? Neither could a faithful Christian believe that. Faith and works are interlocked inseparably in the election and calling in Christ. The greater proportion of the ministry of Jesus was one of continual good works. Even in those He called to follow Him, Christ sought out those who were busy as fishermen, as customs collectors, publicans, and common laborers. Remarkably, we have a vivid example of this fact in Matthew: *18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. 21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. 22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.* (Matt 4:18-22)

It is noteworthy these strong men of the sea responded without question, dropped their nets, left their ships, and straightway followed Christ in a more demanding and spiritually edifying work – that of fishing for the souls of men. God has chosen each of us in the same manner. If the Holy Spirit has opened our spiritual ears, we will have heard the Voice of the Master, *“Come, and follow me!”* He may not tell us with immediate dispatch what work He has for us, but if we follow Him, it will become brilliantly clear at the moment of action. But we must all alike drop our nets, leave our vessels, and follow our Lord Jesus Christ. In following Christ, we learn to do works of edification and healing for others, of teaching and training, and of mercy and compassion.

Jesus related many parables that set an example in good works. Remember the Parable of the Good Samaritan? The driving force in the heart of the Good Samaritan was that of COMPASSION! Compassion evokes action to help. When we see those who are dying of hunger or disease, we must put ourselves in the place of that soul so much so that we actually feel their hurt and hunger. Such compassion compels us to act to alleviate that suffering.

In Paul’s preaching to the Romans and others, he stressed grace over works. Why did he do so? It was because there were many Jews intermixed with the multitudes who believed themselves righteous under the terms of the Law. They were not, and neither COULD they have been. They looked upon the outer appearance in judging the quality of a vessel. Love had no place in their definition of righteousness. But our Lord measured the heart – not only in its present condition, but in what it could become in the hands of the Refiner of precious metal.

James, on the other hand, was preaching to those outside the boundaries of Jewish religion. These had come to believe that outward faith was, in and of itself, altogether sufficient. There are many today who believe that one only needs to make a public profession of faith at the altar and they are bona fide Christians without further teaching or nurturing in the faith. Oftentimes, the poor sinner making such a public profession has no idea who the Lord to whom he pledges allegiance is, or what He has done for him. If we are to enter into a contract, we need to read it carefully with understanding, and we need to know with whom we contract. James is not saying that we are not saved by grace through faith; but that we are saved by a fervent faith unto good works. The good works are witness to the sterling nature of our faith.

Jesus taught of a Sower who went forth to sow; of the woman who took three measures of meal into which she mixed leaven; or the man who sought out goodly pearls until he found the Pearl of Great Price. All these were related to WORK. The measure of our faith is in what good works that faith leads us to accomplish. It may begin with a burden to feed the poor (both spiritual and physical hunger). That burden grows in the heart and is refined by faith until action is the result. ACTION is what the Lord desires.

He never called a listless bum to follow Him unless that bum was changed to a diligent laborer in the fields white for harvest.

Work for the Kingdom of Heaven is an honor and a privilege. In actuality, if we work for Christ, we are enjoying a continual Sabbath, for all of our good works result from His working in our members. It is Christ that works in and through us His purpose to satisfy: *Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.* (Col 1:29) And the work of grace in us was not our initiation, but His: *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:* (Phil 1:6) He is not only the Sovereign who calls us to the work, and initiates the good works; but also the Finisher of the good works.

In every calling, whether medicine, education, engineering, ministry, law, or whatever else, God will work through us for His own glory. Here is a fitting illustration of the point: "In a large metropolitan hospital there is a surgeon who insists upon having a moment alone before entering the operating room. Because of his great skill many of the younger doctors wondered if there might be a relation between his success and this unusual habit. When one of the interns put the question to the surgeon, he answered: "Yes, there is a relationship, a very close one. Before each operation I ask the great Physician to be with me, to guide my hands in their work. There have been times when I didn't know what to do next, and then came a power to go on—power which I know comes from God. I would not think of performing an operation without asking God's help." The surgeon's story spread throughout the country, and one day a father brought his little daughter to the hospital, insisting that the doctor who "worked with God" should operate on his child." —Quiet Hour

I believe we would all prefer a doctor, who may have graduated a state university, and who trusts in the Lord, to operate on the darling of our souls over one who with cold calculation and in depth technical knowledge performed his medical practice – even if he were a graduate, Summa Cum Laude, of Harvard Medical School. It is love that drives the soul in good works for Christ. As Paul observes: *14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) 16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.* (Romans 2:14-16)

The most important work of construction is the foundation. That is an important work: *11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.* (1 Cor 3:11-15)