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Godliness. Reverence. Obedience. Worship.

# GR W

magazine

a quarterly e-magazine designed to promote  
growth in faith and service to God





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## From the Editors...

It's our one-year anniversary! The first issue of GROW magazine was published in July 2017. We are thankful for the interest folks have shown in this publication, and hope it continues to be an encouragement to many. We appreciate the writers who have joined us along the way for

their diligent studies and ability to put down in writing worlds that will help us be better Christians.

If you find GROW magazine to be helpful, please feel free to share it. Forward the notification email, share the website address, or print out an individual article of this PDF document.

Now, come GROW with us!

Cordially,

Sean P. Cavender, chief editor

William Stewart, editor & designer





## Faith and Works | James 2

SEAN CAVENDER | BALD KNOB, ARKANSAS

After writing an article for GROW magazine last year on the text in Romans 4 and Paul's argument of justification by grace through faith, it seemed appropriate to address the nature of biblical faith from another important text in the New Testament – James 2. Romans 4 defends salvation by faith, not by works of the Law of Moses, and appeals to Abraham's faith as our example. James is concerned with the general nature of faith.

*<sup>14</sup> What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, <sup>16</sup> 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? <sup>17</sup> Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. <sup>18</sup> But someone 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."*

*<sup>19</sup> You believe that a God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. <sup>20</sup> But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?*

*<sup>21</sup> Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; <sup>23</sup> 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.*

*<sup>24</sup> You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup> 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? <sup>26</sup> For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead," (James 2:14-26, NASB)*

### Faith Saves

James 2:14-26 begins a critical section in the book of James where the author poses a situation regarding the nature of faith. He asks what use faith is if it does not have works (James 2:14). James asks, "can that faith save him?" James is concerned with the nature of faith relative to salvation; will faith that does not work save a person? James 2 is centered around the nature of the faith that saves—saving faith. He discusses righteousness and justification by faith by appealing to Abraham and Rahab (James 2:23-25). This passage is a defense of saving

faith. We must have the kind of faith discussed in the passage if we want to be saved.

You may be wondering: is this faith the initial faith that we must have in obedience to the gospel? Is James writing about the faith I must have that is demonstrated in repentance, confession, and baptism? The answer is yes. We must believe in God to be saved (Acts 16:31). We are baptized to be saved from our sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). Those who obey the gospel in repentance and baptism are called believers (Acts 16:33-34). The Philippian jailer (Acts 16) was not identified as a believer until after he was baptized! His faith, and the faith James admonishes us to have, is an obedient faith. We must obey God's commands to be forgiven of our sins.

James 2 is not just about our initial faith and obedience to the gospel. James is presenting a holistic view of faith—initial faith in obedience to the gospel and the life of faith that Christians are called to continue to have. Our faithful service as a Christian is just as impactful on our eternal salvation as is whether we've been baptized or not.

### Faith Works

A unique element to James's writing is his ability to conjure up vivid and powerful illustrations. In James 2:15-16, he envisions a situation where a person in need of food and clothing comes to a believer and the believer says *"go in peace, be warmed and be filled"* (James 2:16), but does nothing to help the person in need. He pointedly says, "what use is that?" The obvious conclusion is that a believer who does not accompany his faith with action in harmony with what he says will not be saved. "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself" (James 2:17). This becomes the refrain, repeated throughout the discussion of saving faith. Faith without works is dead; faith alone does not save; a person is justified by works with their faith (James 2:17, 20, 24, 26).

So, James identifies important elements of genuine faith:

- Faith is not merely profession, but involves action
- Faith is not hypocritical, merely acknowledging God, but seeks to do God's will (cf. James 2:19)
- Faith is not shallow and judgmental because it does not hold personal favoritism (cf. James 2:1-4)
- Faith is not merely an appearance or act; it is genuine and sincere in its devotion (cf. James 2:15-16)
- Faith is not simply hearing, but it is doing (cf. James 1:22)

Due to the influence of Calvinistic teaching and the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, many Bible students have a misunderstanding of the role of "works." James 2 poses many issues for the doctrine of salvation by faith alone—since James's point is that faith without works is a dead faith and avails nothing! Yet, people appeal to Paul, who says, *"For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God,"* (Romans 4:2). They argue Paul says a person is justified by faith only, and not by works. If that is true, there is a serious inconsistency in the word of God.

Paul does argue that Abraham was justified by faith, not by works. He wrote, *"For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due,"* (Romans 4:3-4). Abraham was not justified by works—but what kind of works is Paul discussing in the context of Romans 4? Paul anticipates the Judaizing teachers who were requiring Gentiles to keep circumcision and the law of Moses to be saved. The "works" Paul said Abraham was not justified by were the works of the law. Paul said in Romans 3:20, *"because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight..."* Later in Romans 3, he asked *"where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith"* (Romans 3:27). Boasting is excluded in the law of faith, but in a system of works boasting is accepted because it

is earned and deserved—it is “due” to the person who may be boastful (Romans 4:4). In the context of Romans 4, Paul is clearly identifying that a person is not justified by works of the law of Moses. He does not teach that obedience to the “law of faith” is unnecessary (cf. Romans 3:27). In fact, Paul shows that Abraham believed God and walked by faith. He writes that we must walk in the steps of Abraham if we want to model the faith he had (Romans 4:12).

While there may be some difficulty in studying Romans 4, we must honestly study and realize there is no contradiction between Romans 4 and James 2. Paul was not advocating a doctrine of salvation by faith alone apart from obedience to the commands of God. In fact, he was writing about the gospel and how it requires the “*obedience of faith*” (Romans 1:5; 16:26).

Many think “works” is simply defined as something you do, something earned, deserved, and something to boast about. Some may boast because of their works. Paul says salvation is by grace through faith, not by works to be boasted of (Ephesians 2:8-9). Works of merit cannot earn God’s grace and favor and are not in harmony with the gospel of Christ. James 2 does not encourage boasting and glorying in one’s works.

James appeals to Abraham’s work of offering up Isaac upon the altar (James 2:21-23). Abraham’s works were the evidence of a faith that completely trusted in God’s ability, power, and strength to accomplish His will. The Genesis account clearly shows that Abraham was blessed because of his obedience.

*“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” (Genesis 22:18).*

Obedience is the way to receive God’s blessing. God blessed faithful Abraham because of his obedience. In James 2:14-26, when James argues we are justified by faith and works, he is not supposing we have something to boast about. He is not contradicting the apostle Paul. He is proving that faith obeys God! James says that faith without works is dead (James 2:17, 26). A faith that does not obey will not save and will prevent someone from being justified. Abraham’s faith and works perfected him; he was made righteous. James is not forging his own gospel; he is defining true, biblical faith, which works and humbly submits to the commands of God. Faith will obey out of a genuine and sincere heart.

Faith proves itself in loving obedience. The Lord Jesus said if we love Him, then we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). As a result of works, faith is perfected and completed (James 2:22). Yet, it is possible for faith to remain incomplete and unsatisfactory to God. An incomplete faith is hypocritical, a mere profession of good works without anything to vindicate it.

### **The Friend of God**

As a result of Abraham’s faith, he was called the friend of God. We, too, can become God’s friend if we will prove our faith by our loving obedience and good works. Jesus said, “You are My friends if you do what I command you,” (John 15:14). If you have been deceived by the false teachings of salvation by faith alone, study the Scripture and seek a faith that obeys God. Be “obedient to the faith” as the early disciples were (Acts 6:7) and come to the Lord, submitting to God’s commands. Allow your faith to work and act, then you will receive the greatest blessing from God you could ever be given—being His friend.

# The Church Is God's Special People

WAYNE GOFF | KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Jesus Christ came to deliver mankind from his sin (Matthew 1:21). Sin has always separated man from God (Isaiah 59:1-2), and sin caused us to be spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1). The sacrifice of Jesus' own precious blood has redeemed us from the guilt of sin and from the power of death which sin caused (1 Peter 1:18-19; Ephesians 2:4-7). This redemption causes great joy among the saved (see Acts 8:8, 39). It is a privilege to be a child of God, and an eternal heir of the grace of life (Romans 8:16-17).

Today, the concept of "sin" is almost missing in our society. You do not hear it on the radio, television, or social media. The word is not found in our newspapers, magazines, or other writings. Just stop and ask yourself when the last time was that you heard the word "sin" mentioned outside of our churches. Consequently, men and women in America do not **feel** the **need** for salvation because they do not *believe* that they are guilty of sin and in danger before an Almighty God! Preaching about salvation falls on deaf ears because of this.

Similarly, "church" in our society today is a place to solve one's social ills. Go to church to find payment for your late electric bills. Go to church to have a beautiful, traditional wedding. Go to church to leave your child for the day to give mothers a day out. Go to church to find a warm meal, a comfortable bed, and a hot cup of coffee. The social gospel has destroyed the true meaning of the "church."

The Lord's church is the place Jesus gathers together all His saved. "...And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" Acts 2:47. This is where those redeemed from sin by the blood are united. This is "... the church of God which He purchased with His own blood," Acts 20:28. If the church is the blood-bought people, then we should expect it to act like blood-bought people! These



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people have been "set apart" by the blood of Jesus Christ. These people do not act like the world because they are no longer part of the world.

You see, my dear readers, when God saved us by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9), He placed us *"together with Christ"* (Eph. 2:5-6). We are here in His church as *"His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them"* (Eph. 2:10). As children of God, as members of the Lord's church, we have a job to do — remain separate from the sins of the world, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age (see Titus 2:11-12). That is why we are "the church" — "the called out" (Greek, **ek**—out of; **kaleō** — to call; hence **ekklesia**). We might want to remind ourselves of this great truth because when the church is in the world, it is a blessing. But when the world gets in the church it is a travesty! Worldly churches soon die in the eyes of the Lord, for they have forgotten who they are and why they are called out. *"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: 'I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead,'"* (Revelation 3:1).

Many churches of Christ are following the dictates of their denominational neighbors and are trying to become more like them, instead of less like the world! It is killing us as a church and



as a people of God! We need to repent, remember our “first works” of separation from the world and refuse to touch those unclean things! (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Plainly spoken, we need to stand up against the sins of the day — idolatry, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, drunkenness, immodesty, dancing, covetousness, and debauchery! (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). When was the last time you heard the local preacher speak out against these things? Do you know of members of your local church or their children who engage in social drinking, swimming parties, the prom, and other such activities? Do you hear your preacher denounce denominational errors like salvation by faith only, instrumental music in worship, and fellowship with those in sin (2 John 9-11)? More and more churches are becoming friendly with the world, socially acceptable to the denominations, and happy to be a part of them. God forbid!

Listen to what Jesus said about His redeemed disciples, the church: *“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth,”* John 17:14–17. The “world” is that “mass of humanity which stands in opposition to God every day” (1 John 2:15-17). That rebellious “world” **HATES** God’s true people and His true church because the church is **not of the world!** This is the distinctive nature of the church that makes it special to God and to a lost humanity. Christians and the Lord’s church are **IN** the world, but

not **OF** the world. They are of God and have been “called out” from the world of sin and death.

The apostle Paul proclaimed that *“our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself,”* (Philippians 3:20-21). If we are citizens of the heavenly kingdom, then we need to keep this in mind as we go out among the sinful in this world. Do not become like them, dear friends.

So, what is the church of Christ? It is the saved who come together to worship and honor God as they provide a habitation of God through the spirit (Ephesians 2:22, kjv). It is those people who are *“blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,”* (Philippians 2:15). It is a congregation of men and women who have been saved by the grace of God, who rejoice in it, and who consider *“one another in order to stir up love and good works”* (Hebrews 10:24) whenever they assemble together (Hebrews 10:25). The church of Christ is God’s **peculiar** people (Titus 2:14, kjv) —not “peculiar” in the sense of “strange, odd, or weird,” but peculiar in the sense of “being distinguished in nature or character.” Christians are different from the average person in the world. The Lord’s church is a collection of that kind of person. The church is a blessing to those who see them as “the light of the world” and a “city set on a hill which cannot be hidden.” God bless those true churches of Christ today!

# What To Do During Worship Services

JIM MICKELLS | LEWISBURG, TENNESSEE

As we open our New Testament and begin to read we see that worship is an integral part of the Christian's life. God desires for us to worship Him. Yet worship must be as He instructs. Jesus, in His conversation with the woman at the well, gives some vital information about one's service to Jehovah. *"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:23-24). Notice at least three essential elements in our worship: (1) worship must be directed toward the Father; (2) worship must be with the right attitude – in spirit; (3) worship must be in the right way – according to truth.

I would like for us to study a couple of verses in the book of James and apply them to our worship. It is my hope and prayer as we do so, it will help us to improve our devotion to the Lord.

*"Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves"* (James 1:21-22).

What to do before the sermon – *"lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness."* We must put off anything which will defile, any residue of sin remaining prior to our conversion so we can come before the Lord with pure hearts. Paul told those at Colosse to put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language, etc. (Colossians 2:8-9). Then he tells them to put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, love, etc. (Colossians 2:10-14). Worship by those who practice sin is not met with God's approval. The Psalmist says, *"Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy*



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*place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully"* (Psalm 24:3-4). Jesus told His disciples, if they remembered their brother (religiously speaking) had something against them, first go be reconciled to them, then come offer their gift on the altar (Matthew 5:23-24).

Donald Fream, in his commentary, gives this outline on how to "Prepare Yourself To Hear" the sermon.

1. Get ready physically. Proper rest, preparation the day before. The state of your physical body has much to do with your spiritual attitude.
2. Get ready intellectually. (1) Lay aside worries (unpaid bills, Sunday dinner, etc.). (2) Determine in your heart you will listen (plan it). (3) Prepare to take notes (have Bible, paper, pen ready).
3. Get ready spiritually. (1) Lay apart filthiness (all ungodly attitudes). (2) Pray beforehand. (3) Expect something big in your own heart ("Sir, we would see Jesus.")

(Donald Fream, *A Chain of Jewels From James and Jude*, p. 58).

What to do during the sermon – *“receive with meekness the implanted word.”* It is time to put the intellectual preparation into practice. We need to bring the mind in from the world, from the job, our family, and the restaurant we are planning to eat lunch, etc. and center it upon the word of God. Our hearts need to be open and receptive to the things taught from the Bible, so we can put those things into practice. The apostle Paul commended the church at Thessalonica for not only receiving the word he taught them as being from God, but also because they allowed that word to work effectively in them (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The key to allowing the word to be sown in our hearts is meekness. Vine says of this word, *“It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting; it is closely linked to the word humility”* (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, pp. 737 & 738). The servant of the Lord who worships as instructed wants to know what the Scriptures teach and listens attentively and searches diligently to be sure all the truth is taught. Our attitude must be *“If God said it, I believe it and I am willing to receive it!”*

What to do after the sermon – *“be you doers of the word.”* There comes a time when we must put into practice what we have been taught. Three times in James 1 we find the word “doer,” vv. 22, 23, & 25. Each time it is contrasted with the word hearer. God expects more from His children. It is good to hear but to please Him we must be doers as well. There are a number of verses which make this very clear. Jesus said, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21). One must confess Him as Lord, yet to show you really believe this and for it to benefit you, you must be a doer of the Father’s will. The writer of the book of Hebrews says, *“though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal*

*salvation to all who obey Him”* (Hebrews 5:8-9). Will He be the source of eternal salvation to those who do not obey Him? No! He promises to save only those who will submit to Him.

Some years ago, I held several meetings with a church which meets just north of Nashville, Tennessee. One of the things which I remember very vividly is a sign they had placed just above the door before exiting the building. It read *“Leaving to Serve.”* As we assemble with the people of God, we should stir each other to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24-25) and go forth and practice the things we have been taught.

May the Lord help us see the seriousness of our worship which is to be offered to Him. We are not just “playing church.” We need to come before our God with pure hearts and clean hands, ready to listen to His word, offering our worship in spirit and truth, and leaving ready to serve our Creator. Is our attitude like that of the Psalmist? *“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD’”* (Psalm 122:1). Do we have a heart of humility like the tax collector in the parable stated by Jesus in Luke 18:9-14? Finally, are we willing to become great in the eyes of our Lord by serving Him and others (Matthew 21:25-28)?

Seriously consider what the Psalmist says in this great psalm of thanksgiving: *“Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations”* (Psalm 100:1-5).

What kind of worship are you offering to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?



# Show Me Your Faith

WILLIAM STEWART | KINGSTON, ONTARIO

In the latter portion of James 2, we find a great discussion of faith's dependence upon works. The writer merges a collection of examples with his constant affirmation – faith without works is dead (James 2:17, 20, 24, 26). The destitute brother or sister who receives our well wishes and nothing more is destitute still (James 2:14-16). The demons are certain of the existence of God, but their doom is equally certain, for they do not do the works of God (James 2:19). The patriarch Abraham and Rahab the harlot were both justified before God, not merely because they believed, but because they exercised faith in God (James 2:21-23, 25).

One modern day faith only advocate admits of James 2, *"The passage definitely seems to cause serious problems for the 'salvation by faith alone' concept."*<sup>1</sup> After redefining some terms and quoting a couple wordier translations, he bolsters his false doctrine by claiming, *"Any verse that ascribes salvation to faith/belief, with no other requirement mentioned, is a declaration that salvation is by faith alone."*<sup>2</sup> That's no more true than saying any verse that ascribes salvation to perseverance (Matthew 10:22), with no other requirement mentioned, is a declaration that salvation is by perseverance alone.

Many are familiar with Martin Luther's disparaging accusation of the epistle by James as *"...an epistle of straw, compared to the others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it."*<sup>3</sup> He did not stop there in his assault. He portrayed James as one who *"...wanted to guard against those who relied on faith without works, but was unequal to the task... He mangles the Scriptures and thereby opposes Paul and all Scripture."*<sup>4</sup> I suspect much of the disdain for James among Calvinistic folks today can be traced back to Luther's low opinion of the book.



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However, the opposition to James' approach to faith and works goes far beyond the days of Martin Luther. The inspired writer knew his message would not be popular among some, even among his contemporaries. James provided the words of an imaginary dissenter right in the text. Notice, *"You have faith, and I have works"* (James 2:18), or as the NLT renders it, *"Some people have faith; others have good deeds."* The dissident basically says this, "James, you may excel in good works. Good for you. I excel in faith, and that is equally sufficient."

The false notion of salvation by faith alone was just as enticing to some in the first century as it is today. To the one who stakes his claim to heaven on his faith alone, James boldly requests, *"Show me your faith without your works"* (James 2:18). Pause and think about that for a moment. How is faith shown apart from works? What is the "demonstration" of faith, if not works? How does one bear evidence of their faith without works?

The one who espouses the "some have faith" position is like little Johnny who tells his 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classmates with intense fervor and wonderful detail about his new Learjet. It is one thing to make to make lofty claims, it is quite another to



support the claim with proof. As Johnny cannot show evidence of his Learjet (since he doesn't actually have one); neither can the faith only proponent demonstrate his faith (since faith without works is dead). *"Show me your faith without your works"* – it is impossible.

Having displayed the conundrum of the faith only proponent, James states the truth as simple as he can: *"...I will show you my faith by my works"* (James 2:18). Faith requires demonstration. James is not alone in emphasizing the need for works. Hear what the Lord said: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven..."* Are these not ones who have faith but not works? He continues, *"...but he who does the will of My Father in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). To have the hope of heaven, to have saving faith (James 2:14), we must DO the will of God. The apostle John concurs, *"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him"* (1 John 2:3-4). There is a difference between saying we know Him and knowing we know Him. Those who know Him keep His commandments; they obey; they have works. Paul speaks about those who *"...profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable,*

*disobedient, and disqualified for every good work"* (Titus 1:16). In the same epistle, Paul identified Christians as being *"...zealous for good works"* (Titus 2:14), *"...ready for every good work..."* (Titus 3:1), *"...careful to maintain good works"* (Titus 3:8), *"...that they may not be unfruitful"* (Titus 3:14). The apostle Peter asked, *"...what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now 'If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?' Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator"* (1 Peter 4:19). Tell me again how it is possible to *"show me your faith without your works"*?

James is not an aberration or nonconformist. His message is not at odds with Paul, John, Peter or the Lord. Despite the popularity of salvation by faith alone in today's religious world, not a single Bible writer gave support to such a doctrine. The Bible consistently reveals the necessity of obedience and of works. *"...Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead"* (James 2:17).

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# Six Common Hesitations to Personal Evangelism

CHADWICK BREWER | WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

When the topic of personal evangelism comes up, people are invariably excited, but often they are excited for others' work or zeal.

We are often rather hesitant to get out there, put in the effort, put ourselves on the line, and possibly get rejected. The hesitations and complaints that you often hear are often very similar, and not at all new to our generation. If you were to go back to Exodus 3 and 4, you will see that they are very similar to the hesitations and complaints that Moses had, when God told him to "go." Oddly enough, those objections raised by Moses were not sufficient for him to skive off work, and they are not good enough for us either.

Lack of knowledge. This is a common objection from people and it is a legitimate concern, but it should not prevent one from engaging in the Lord's work indefinitely. Here are a few things to consider. First, if you are lacking in knowledge, then work diligently on your knowledge so that you can share with others. Second, teaching is a great way to learn. Talk to almost any preacher, teacher, or educator and they will tell you that the teacher almost always gets more out of the study than the student. Teaching is a way of learning. Third, what you lack, someone else might have. When Jesus sent out the disciples to teach, he sent them two by two. When you consider the teachers of the New Testament, you often think of the pairs: Aquila and Priscilla, Paul and Barnabas, Barnabas and John Mark, Paul and Timothy, etc. Solomon extols the virtue of having two people in an endeavor in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. While we might feel that we don't have enough knowledge on our own, with a companion, our knowledge base is exponentially increased. Last, we might be surprised by just how much we know. When



we spend our time with our local congregation, sitting in Bible classes, and listening to sermons, it can be easy to feel that we don't know very much, especially compared to older Christians, the preacher, or the elders, but a Christian, even a relatively new Christian, might be surprised by just how much they know, compared to those in the world. Even our little bit of knowledge is a treasure trove of life-giving

water to those who are perishing. Don't believe that you have too little to share. Even the little that you believe you have, is enough to save someone's soul.

Lack of experience. Lack of experience can be a real deterrent. Stepping into the unknown can be daunting and terrifying. Yet, if you allow a lack of experience to stop you from working, then you will never get going. Everyone begins somewhere. As was mentioned above, exercise the option to go with someone more experienced. I can virtually guarantee you that the local preacher, your elders, or more experienced Christians would love someone to join them in their work and get more people active, zealous, and knowledgeable about the work of the Lord.

Lack of confidence. *"I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ – I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!"* (2 Corinthians 10:1). Here Paul seems to be addressing some

criticisms that he has received for his seeming lack of confidence when face to face with the Corinthians. His bodily appearance or demeanor is insufficient in some people's estimations, yet we cannot deny that Paul was extremely effective in his work with the Corinthians. Confidence is usually either an inflated sense of ability resulting from a lack of knowledge, or it is hard won by experience and success. When we focus on our lack of confidence, we are focusing on ourselves, and not the one for whom we work.

Lack of time. A lack of time is a real concern for many people. Reaching the community does take a commitment of time. Once you find someone to study with, it will take more time. One of the harder things can be that there is not definitive time commitment. Sometimes you can spend weeks and months finding someone to study with. Once you have started studying with them, some people are convinced easily while others take years to convince. The lack of a definite sacrifice of time often scares people away from committing any time at all. Here are a few things to consider. You do not have to commit an indefinite amount of time. You have to weigh your options and decide what is the best use of your time and decide if sacrifices in other areas are worth making time for evangelism. If you find that you have an hour or two a week to devote to reaching out with the gospel, then use it, and put restrictions on yourself. If you do not have the time to take the lead on a Bible study, find someone else that does have the time, and then aid them as best that you can. There are many people, especially preachers, elders, and deacons, who would love having someone generate a Bible study for them and sit in with them. You could also find methods of evangelism that are less time demanding. If your congregation sends out correspondent courses, perhaps you could volunteer to be the one that grades and send out the new ones. Perhaps you could take the time each week to hand out cards for the church to everyone you interact with. There are a number of ways to contribute to evangelism, and we are called to be wise and make the best

use of the time. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

Ineloquent. In Exodus 4:10-17, this was Moses's excuse to why he could not be the one to go and do God's command. God said that He would allow someone else to speak but it would still be Moses who would do the work that God assigned. It wasn't long before Moses was speaking without Aaron as his tongue. Moses's effectiveness did not lie in his eloquence; it rested in God who sent him. When Paul speaks of his eloquence in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, he says, *"I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom....-so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."* Paul's effectiveness was not in his delivery of the message but in the message being delivered. It is the word of God that is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. (Hebrews 4:12) It is God's implanted word that is able to save souls. (James 1:21) God's power does not rest in my eloquence, it rests in His eternal nature.

I am not the right person. *"And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* (Esther 4:14) Esther did not perceive herself to be the person for the task ahead of her. It's easy to think that we might not be the right or the best person for a task, but we might be the only person or the person that God has prepared for such a time as this. The march of history has been pushed forward by God using unlikely people to accomplish tasks far too great for them, in order to show His greatness and majesty. Perhaps that's exactly why you are the right person because God has chosen you. The majority of time, God chose people who either seemed to be or felt like they were the wrong people for the task. God did not use Moses when Moses felt ready to rescue God's people (Acts 7:23-25). He waited for 40 years until Moses felt like the least likely person for the task. Gideon was racked with doubt because he

felt like he least likely person for God to choose. Paul was chosen when he was on his way to persecute Christians. How do you know that you are not the person that God will use for His tasks?

All of these hesitations and complaints have something in common; they focus on ourselves. They seemingly forget God. The hesitations focus on our perception of our abilities. Remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, *“For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many*

*were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.”* The ability of the gospel to be spread does not rest upon our abilities, it resides in the gospel. God’s ability to work through us is not hampered by abilities, it is exemplified by it! Stop looking inside yourself and doubting. Start looking at God and having faith.



# In The World ... Not Of The World, Part 2

WILLIAM STEWART | KINGSTON, ONTARIO

Our previous article concluded: “To be in the world but not of the world means we abstain from the wickedness of the world, not from living in the world.”

## Jesus wouldn't do that!

I've heard some folks justify the insistence of their will upon others on the basis that Jesus wouldn't do this or that. Jesus wouldn't go to a rock concert, or to a football game, or to the movies! Jesus wouldn't celebrate Christmas, or go to a vacation resort, or read a fantasy novel. Jesus wouldn't have a TV in His house, own an expensive car, or go to a restaurant that serves alcohol.. There is an endless list of things that Jesus wouldn't do. I'm curious; how do these folks know what Jesus would or wouldn't do?

We have four gospel accounts detailing the life of Christ, but very little is revealed about Him apart from the 3+ years of His ministry. The gospels were not intended to be a chronicle of Jesus' day to day life. The writers focused on major spiritual events: his baptism, a lengthy fast accompanied by temptation, a selection of sermons, discourses and parables, occasional conflicts with the religious leaders, numerous miracles, the events leading up to His death, His resurrection, and His ascension. I would be surprised if we have details from more than 100 days out of the Lord's life! How presumptuous for someone to think they know what Jesus did or didn't do with His spare time. Or maybe the thought is that He never had any spare time – that He did nothing but preach, heal, and occasionally sleep.

First, let's acknowledge – none of the things listed two paragraphs back actually existed in Jesus' day. He didn't do those things, not because they would be wrong to do, but because no one was doing them. The Bible says very little about Jesus' leisure time (again, that's not the purpose of the gospels), but consider a few things:



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- Jesus dealt with judgmental Pharisees who tried to legislate every aspect of life, too. While on a leisurely walk with His disciples, the Pharisees accused them of doing “*what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath*,” because they plucked heads of grain and ate them (Matthew 12:1-2). They hadn't broken the Sabbath; the problem was the Pharisees made their own rules and imposed them on people.
- Jesus “...*came eating and drinking...*” He went to social gatherings (dinners, weddings, parties, etc.). For this reason, the Pharisees derided Him as “*a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!*” (Matthew 11:19) [NOTE – this does not mean Jesus was out bar hopping or any such thing. Both the Old and New Testaments warn against the consumption of alcohol. The wine Jesus consumed would be more akin to what we today call grape juice].
- The disciples of John and the Pharisees apparently spent a lot of time fasting. They were offended at Jesus and His disciples because of their eating and drinking (Mark 2:15-19). In response to the implication that He and His disciples should be more subdued and less festive, Jesus gave an analogy of the bridegroom with his friends. Prior to the wedding, they don't mourn and fast, but rather enjoy one another's company. Jesus enjoyed the company of His friends.

- After the apostles returned to Jesus, having been sent out by Him to preach and heal, He told them to “*Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while*” (Mark 6:31). Is He telling them to take a vacation? Well, not in so many words. He encouraged them to take a break, to have some leisure time, to refresh themselves. Perhaps it is noteworthy that our English word recreation is from the Latin *recreare*, meaning to create anew, to restore, to refresh.
- Jesus occasionally tried to get away from things for a bit. I’m not talking about His frequent alone time spent in prayer (Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28), but the times when He left Jewish territory altogether, going to Gentile regions like Tyre, Sidon, and the Decapolis (Mark 5:1; 7:24, 31). He taught and did miracles in these places, but His statement to the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:24) would indicate that was not His reason for being there. Just as He called upon His disciples to “rest a while,” it would seem Jesus sought to rest a while.

Am I saying Jesus would go to a rock concert, read a fantasy novel and own an expensive car? I don’t know whether He would or not. The Bible doesn’t give us much about the Lord’s leisure time activities. But it speaks volumes that the disciples of John and of the Pharisees sought to stifle the mood, whereas Jesus encouraged fun, fellowship and a bit of leisure time. Jesus expected people to obey God and live for Him. To do so does not require us to be stern-faced hermits who never go anywhere or do anything that is not spiritual in nature.

We are to be in the world, not of the world. This does not require that we go out of the world or have nothing to do with the world (John 17:15; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10), but that we do not engage in wickedness. It demands devotion to God and His will. It does not mean we cannot enjoy life; it means we live a life dedicated to serving the Lord. Being in the world and not of the world is a matter of character, seeking to emulate the goodness of God and not yielding to temptations of the evil one. That doesn’t mean we don’t participate in anything that is of this world; it means we don’t engage in sinful activities.

A word of caution as we conclude. We have been called by God to be His people, to live His way. That doesn’t mean we cannot participate in varsity sports, vacation tours, or service clubs. Being a child of God doesn’t require that we not watch movies, listen to the radio or join a book club. However, on a daily basis we need to acknowledge that our primary responsibility is to the Lord and His will. Do not let things belonging to a passing world keep us from serving the Creator, Sustainer, and Eternal Judge of the world. It is possible to get so involved in the things of the world that we make ourselves useless to the Lord and His cause. If our priorities are set right, activities we participate in will turn into opportunities to shine as lights in the world (Matthew 5:14-16; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Peter 2:11-12).

# OCTOBER 2018 PREVIEW

## EXPOSITORY ARTICLE

Jeff Asher will work from Romans 7, providing an exposition of this great text from the apostle Paul.

## CHURCH ARTICLE

Sean Cavender will focus on the nature of edification, our individual responsibilities to build one another up, and how it will aid in other aspects of the Lord's work.

## WORSHIP ARTICLE

William Stewart addresses the difference between emotion and emotionalism.

## APPLICATION ARTICLE

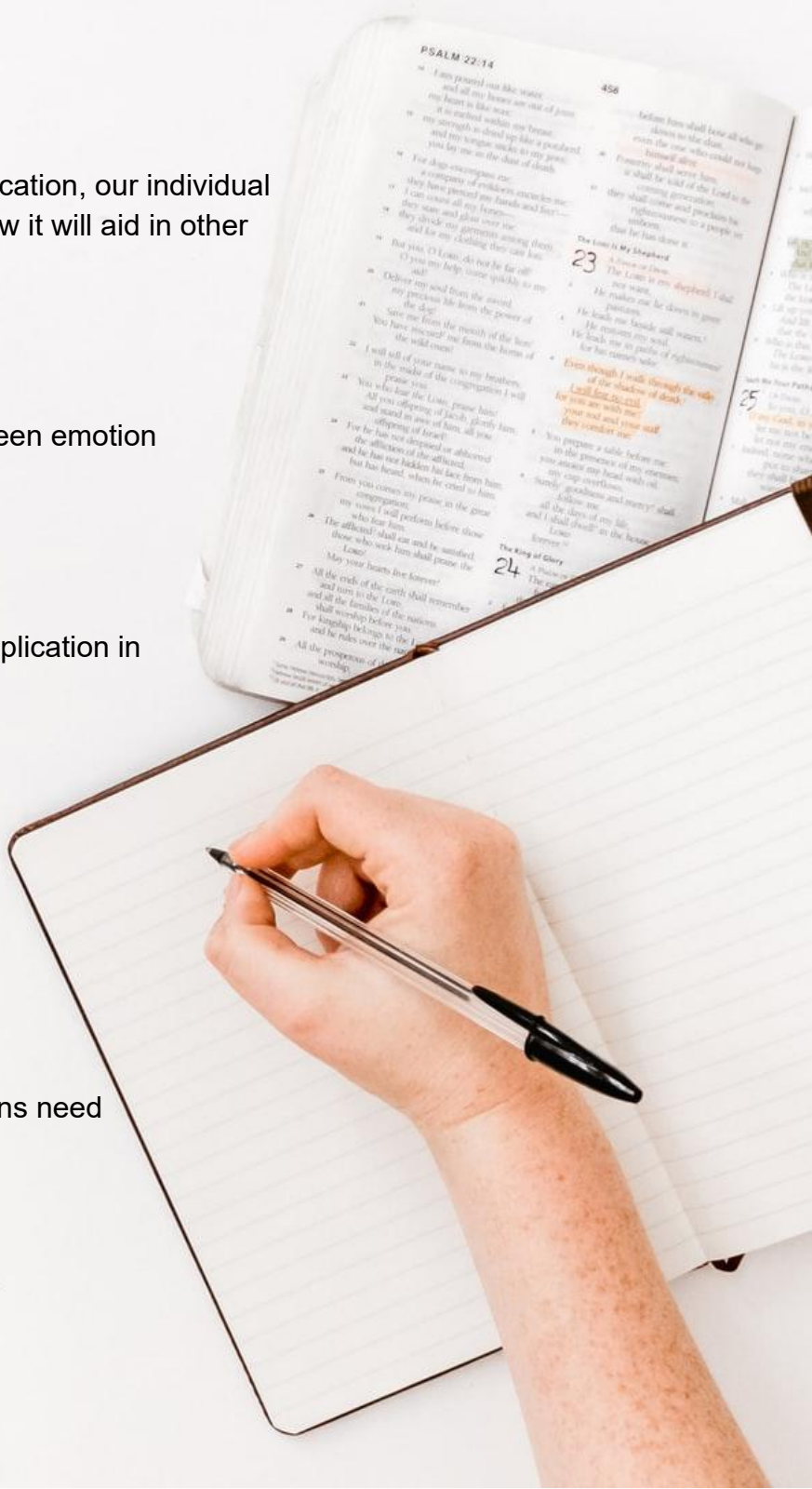
Sean Sullivan will draw lessons for practical application in the Christian's life from a portion of Romans 7.

## EVANGELISM ARTICLE

Trey Haskett will address the need for us to see the field that is white for harvest from John 4.

## BEYOND THE BASICS ARTICLE

Jeremy Woodman will focus on issues Christians need to keep in mind when it comes to social media.



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