

## Th122 Foundation Doctrines

### *Lesson Th122 - 11 Faith and Works*

Once there was a small river that flooded during the rainy season. Two local men decided they would build a rope bridge across the river. These men had built rope bridges before and felt confident that they would not face any major problems. But, they soon discovered that it would not be as easy as they had hoped. Although there were many trees along the river, they could not find a place where there was a large tree on both sides of the river across from each other. This forced them to make a decision. They would have to use one large tree, and on the opposite bank, a much smaller one. After many hours the two men completed their rope bridge between the two trees.

"I believe that we have made a good bridge," the first man said to the other. "I believe that you are right," the second man replied. "And I think that the small tree is more than adequate to hold a man's weight." The first man rubbed his beard as he stared at the small tree intently and said, "I agree. You can be the first person who walks across the bridge!" This led to a great argument as to who should be the first to cross the river. Although they both said that they believed the tree would hold, neither of them was willing to be the first to try it.

James, the half-brother of Christ, and writer of the Book of James, talks about this in the Bible. This is what he wrote:

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead (James 2:14-26).

James ends this passage with a powerful statement. He says that "faith without works is dead." According to a previous lesson, Paul taught us that we are saved by grace through faith. Paul makes it very clear that we cannot be saved by works or good deeds. We receive faith by believing, having faith in, Jesus Christ. James is not disagreeing with Paul. Rather, he is making

the case that true faith will always produce works of faith. James tells the story of Abraham and his son Isaac.

God had promised Abraham that his descendants would inherit all the land of Israel. His wife gave birth to their son Isaac when she was 90 years old. God promised that it would be through Isaac that the promise would be fulfilled. One day God commanded Abraham to take his 13-year-old son, Isaac, to the top of the mountain to sacrifice him. So Abraham took Isaac up to the top of the mountain. He prepared the wood for the sacrifice fire, bound his son Isaac, and place him upon the wood. He drew his knife and held it up, prepared to kill Isaac.

Suddenly, God called to Abraham and stopped him.

This is an amazing story of faith. Abraham's faith in God was so complete that he knew in his heart that God would not break his promise. He knew that God had said that it would be through Isaac that the inheritance would come. Therefore, if Abraham obeyed God and sacrificed Isaac, Abraham believed that God would even bring Isaac back from the dead to fulfill his promise (Heb 11:19).

This lesson is **important** because this story of Abraham and the teaching of the apostle James show us that true faith will always result in action—works of faith.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that though our good works do not save us, yet faith without works is dead. We need both.

Let's **review** what we have discovered in this lesson:

1. The Apostle James wrote that faith without works was what? [Pause]  
A. If you said that “faith without works is dead,” you are correct.
2. Can a person be saved by doing good works? [Pause]  
A. If you said no, a person must be saved by faith, then you are correct.
3. What apostle said that faith and works are tied together? [Pause]  
A. If you said that the apostle James taught that faith and works are tied together, then you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to watch this lesson at least three times. Memorize the simple statement, "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). Find another believer and discuss what you have learned with them.