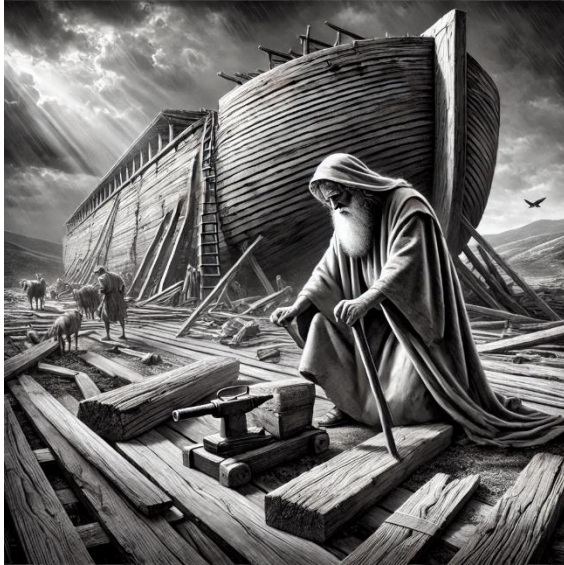


Faith Obeys God



Noah Building the Ark, generated by ChatGPT 03-13-2025

Hebrews 11:8 *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out into a place which he was afterward going to receive for an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he went.*

Acts 6:7 *And the Word of God was increasing. And the number of the disciples in Jerusalem was multiplying exceedingly; even a great crowd of the priests obeyed the faith.*

Romans 16:26 *but now has been made plain, and by the prophetic Scriptures, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:*

Faith obeys God. Faith hears God and then acts on what God has said! For instance, Noah heard the word of the Lord, and obeyed God by building the Ark, and saved his entire household. Abraham's faith caused him to obey God by leaving Ur of the Chaldees and going to the Promised Land. Hebrews chapter 11 shows us example after example of people having faith, and in each and every case they expressed their faith in some tangible act of obedience, such as setting out for a land they knew nothing about. We know that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had faith in God because they obeyed God by refusing to bow down to the golden statue of King Nebuchadnezzar. Their faith in God enabled them to obey under stress and to even take a life-and-death risk for God.

The apostle Peter learned about the obedience of faith when he walked on the water. Jesus commanded Peter, Peter believed and stepped out of the boat, Peter then walked on the water. The obedience of faith obeys Jesus and gets out of the boat!

Matthew 14:28-29 *And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." (29) He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.*

Faith and obedience are not separate, they are part of the same cloth because anyone who truly believes God, also truly obeys God. When we try to part faith from obedience we always end up in a spiritual mess. We find ourselves in bad spiritual states such as hypocrisy, disobedience, doubt and rebellion. Here below is a quick list of the various configurations of faith and obedience. Which one do you want to be in?

- A. *Living faith* believes God and then goes out and obeys God (Hebrews 11:24-26)
- B. *Dead faith* believes God but does not produce any good works (James 2:20)
- C. *Doubt* has insufficient faith and receives nothing from the Lord (James 1:5-8)
- D. *Unbelief* refuses to believe God and cannot be blessed (Hebrews 3:18,19)
- E. *Hypocrisy* claims to believe God but blatantly disobeys God (Matthew 23:25)
- F. *Disobedience* believes God, but is willful, and fails to obey God (Matthew 21:28-32)
- G. *Rebellion* deliberately defies God, and deliberately disobeys God (Deuteronomy 31:27)

Jesus fully expected His disciples to obey Him and to abide in Him. He was their Master and Lord and they were His disciples. Abiding in Christ still entails obeying His commandments. Notice the word “if” below:

John 15:10-14 *If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (11) I have spoken these things to you so that My joy might remain in you and your joy might be full. (12) This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (13) No one has greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (14) You are My friends **if** you do whatever I command you.*

If we obey His commandments we are His friends, *if* we obey His commandments we abide in His love. Favor is conditional upon obedience! Even Jesus was subject to the law of obedience. He kept His Father’s commandments and so abided in His love (John 15:10). In fact Jesus learned this obedience through suffering:

Hebrews 5:8-10 *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. (9) And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, (10) being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.*

If even Jesus had to obey God, then surely Christians must also obey Him! We are to obey the commandments of Jesus, and thus to abide in His love (John 15:10,14)!

James the brother of Jesus wrote an entire epistle about the dangers of separating faith from action. His audience seems to have been relatively wealthy Jewish Christians in the Dispersion. They were businessmen who travelled extensively (James 4:13-17), but who were stingy and cold-hearted and treated the poorer members of the church with utter contempt (James 2:1-26). James pens a very strongly worded correction to their attempted justification of their materialistic status-seeking lifestyle:

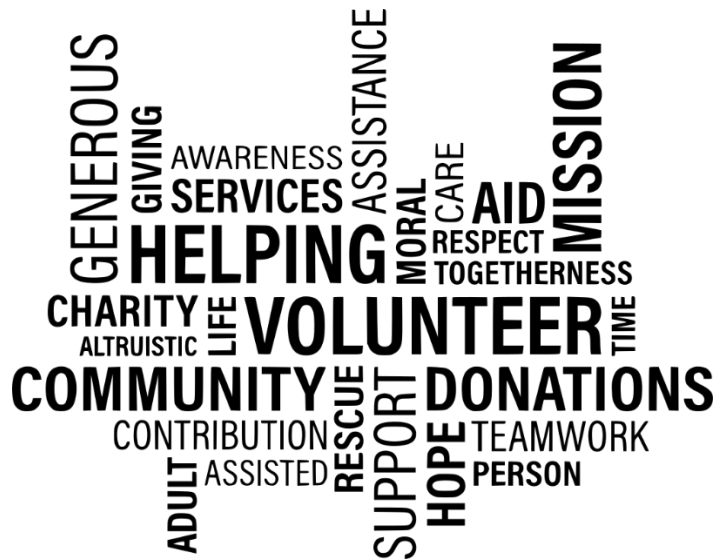
James 2:14-26 *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? (15) If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? (17) So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (18) But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. (19) You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! (20) Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? (21) Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? (22) You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; (23) and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. (24) You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. (25) And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? (26) For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.*

James accuses them of having the same morality as demons (James 2:19). Demons believe, demons tremble, but demons are selfish and nasty and disobey God. James was ordering these Christians to obey Christ by: a) not despising poorer Christians (James 2:1-13) and b) not sending thoughts and prayers instead of practical help (James 2:14-16) .

There are seven key points about faith in these verses:

- 1) Faith is insufficient for salvation unless it results in works (James 2:14-17)
- 2) Faith without works is useless faith (James 2:20)
- 3) Faith is completed by works (James 2:21,22)

- 4) Faith is inseparably active along with our works (James 2:22)
- 5) Faith is demonstrated by works (James 2:18)
- 6) The demons have faith without works and are not saved (James 2:19)
- 7) Faith without works is dead faith (James 2:17, 26)



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It is very clear from the rest of the New Testament that we are saved by faith, not by our works lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8,9). However, those verses go on to say that we are made for good works and that is our whole purpose in life (Ephesians 2:10, Titus 2:14). So, we cannot surgically separate faith from works. Saving faith leads to a new creation, and the new creation eventually does good works.

Let's be clear, our works do not create merit on some heavenly scoreboard so that we are saved when we are "good enough". Many a sinner has been gloriously saved without doing any good works at first, the good works come later as proof of faith!

An oft-quoted example of saving faith, without works, is the thief on the Cross. However, James was not writing to the thief on the Cross! Instead, James was writing to selfish materialists who thought they had their ticket to Heaven and could lead scornful and abusive lifestyles without penalty and who wanted to play power games in church. Their faith had died. They were serving their money and their egos and not God.

It is spiritual anarchy to believe that once you have prayed the Sinner's Prayer that you now have your ticket to Heaven and can go on living your life without any reference to the commandments of Jesus Christ. If you do that, your heart will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, your faith will die, you will become an unbeliever, and you will perish.

Hebrews 3:12-13 *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. (13) But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

What is an “evil unbelieving heart” that leads Christians to fall away from God? It is a heart that desires to sin, so it conveniently separates doctrine from lifestyle! It is a heart that can worship God on Sunday, and be cold, cruel and ruthless on Monday.

Obedience purifies our hearts and strengthens us spiritually so we can be righteous Christians in a very unrighteous world:

Romans 6:16 *Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of **obedience, which leads to righteousness?***

1 Peter 1:22 *Having **purified your souls** by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,*

When we put our faith into action we start receiving large doses of the love of God because our heart has been purified in the truth and the love of God can abide in us:

1 John 3:14-18 *We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. ...By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. (17) But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? (18) Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

The test of genuine spiritual life is in displaying practical sacrificial agape love to our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to lay down our lives for them, just as Christ lay down His life for us. This includes parting with the world's goods in order to assist those in need.

Faith involves being a good soldier of Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:3). A good soldier has faith in the Commander. The soldier trusts the wisdom, judgement, and access to superior intelligence that the Commander has, even if the order seems strange. Like a

good soldier, a person of faith is prepared to suffer hardship for the gospel in order to carry out the will of the Commander, just as Paul, Silas and Timothy did.

Faith obeys God. Obedience completes and fulfills faith. Faith working through love produces good works, which prove that the love of God and the life of God dwells in our hearts. As a result our hearts are being purified unto righteousness.

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[This article is a continuation of my thought in the article [Do Christians Have to Obey the Commandments of Jesus Christ?](#) For a detailed explanation of the relationship between faith and works see my short book [Downloading Grace from Heaven](#)]