

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: BE YE DOERS OF THE WORD

Scripture: James 2: selected verses beginning with the 14th.

What profit is it, my brethren, for a man to say he hath faith, and hath not works? Can faith save him: Yea, a man may say, I will show thee I have faith without works; but I say, Show me thy faith without works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. For if a brother or sister be naked, and destitute, and one of you say, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled; notwithstanding he give not those things which are needful to the body; what profit is your faith unto such? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone. Therefore wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead, and cannot save you? Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble; thou hast made thyself like unto them, not being justified..... Ye see then that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. For, as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.

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Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

In the preceding sermon of this series we stressed the conclusion that men are saved by grace; that grace is the gift of God, not God's payment of a debt he owes to man; and that salvation is not and cannot be earned by good works. "By grace are ye saved, not of works, lest any man should boast." No man can earn his salvation. But he does have to work at it.

Justification by faith is the beginning of the spiritual life not its goal. When a man believes on the name of Jesus, accepts him as Savior and Redeemer, and manifests faith in him, God accepts that man, pardons him, and starts him on his way. But he has by no means "arrived!" He is not yet a complete, or a perfect, or a mature man. He is only released from bondage, and made free by the grace of God to become what he ought to become. He still has to render obedience to God, receive the ordinances of God's church, and continue in works of righteousness to the end.

Perhaps the processes of salvation may be better understood if we use one or two illustrations. In one way, the justification and salvation made possible for us through Jesus Christ may be likened to the cancellation of an intolerably and hopelessly huge and staggering debt, which we can never hope to repay. The grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, cancels the debt. With the debt cancelled, how much are we worth? How much money do

we have in the bank? We are still paupers. We owe nothing, but we also own nothing, because up until the moment of justification all we could produce had to be applied on the debt; there was nothing we could call our own. But once the debt is cancelled, we can begin to hope. We can begin to work for ourselves, and to enjoy the fruits of our labors. We can begin to put some money in the bank to our credit. Of course, in doing this we must never lose sight of the love and the grace which cancelled the debt in the first place and made work possible and profitable.

Another illustration is suggested by Paul in the third chapter of First Corinthians, where he says that Christ is the foundation upon which every life must be built, and that "other foundation can no man lay." Every building must rest on some kind of foundation. Men do not begin even a foundation until they have received a clear title to the land on which the building is to stand. Jesus gives us the only sure foundation on which to build a life. He gives us a guaranteed title to our building site, without mortgage or encumbrance. But he does not supply the material, or do the construction work for us. That we must do for ourselves.

We build the structure of our lives by the works we do in the flesh, during the period of our earthly probation. Each of those works will be tried as by fire in the day of judgment. Some works will

be destroyed like wood, hay, or stubble in this fiery test, unworthy to endure, unworthy to receive any reward. Others will meet the test like gold, and will stand forever -- an eternal reward for the one who has built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Paul goes on to say that even though a man's work be burned as unworthy, he himself may be saved -- perhaps with little or no reward of glory remaining, and nothing much to show for his labors -- if he remains steadfast and unmovable upon the foundation of Jesus Christ.

Another scriptural illustration of the relative place of faith and works is found in Revelation 20, verses 12 and 15. "And I say the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books (plural) were opened; and another book (singular) was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works....And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Those who are justified by faith, their debt of sin cancelled, have their names recorded in the book of life. That is the factor which decides whether they are to be saved or lost; but their degree of reward in the day of judgment depends on the record of their works as it is written in "the books."

Some people are quite sure that they are saved, but become confused if you ask them "Saved from what, and saved to what?" If a man's debts are cancelled, he is in a sense saved; but is he then immediately free to enjoy the abundant life of a millionaire? If someone gives you title to a building site, and even furnishes the foundation on which to build, are you ready to move in and enjoy a new house? If a chronic alcoholic falls into the river and some brave bystander saves him from drowning, is he really saved if he immediately returns to the nearest saloon? Suppose that I have to pawn my watch? The pawnshop takes fire. The pawnbroker manages to save the watch as he dashes to the street. Is it really saved? It is saved, perhaps, but not redeemed.

Similarly the processes of salvation are not complete without redemption. No man is completely saved until he is restored to the place or situation where he can begin to perform the actions and

functions for which he was created. Such performance is not only a prerequisite of, but an infallible proof of redemption. The alcoholic is not redeemed until he returns to his rightful place and functions in business, society, and family. The watch is not redeemed until it is restored to its owner and to its designated function of telling him the time. No man is really saved until he begins to manifest the good works for which he was created. There is no abundant entrance into the kingdom without good works. And the degree of our reward of glory received in that kingdom will depend on the good works done in Christ's name -- in his Spirit -- under the motivation of his life which dwells in us. The kind of house we shall occupy in eternity depends on the building materials supplied by our works.

In both Old and New Testaments, works are nearly always tied up with this idea of reward. Over and over again the scriptures say that men shall be rewarded according to their works -- good for good, evil for evil. Men are saved by faith, but they are not rewarded for their faith; they are rewarded for their works. Works cannot save, but saved men must work. Jesus paid it all, but he did not do it all. Every man must in a sense work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.

There is no quarrel, no contradiction between salvation by faith, and reward according to works. Faith which does not transform character, which does not change action and bear the fruit of good works is not faith at all. Faith is more than mere intellectual assent. Devils believe in God, and recognize Christ as his Son; but they have no salvation because they do not yield themselves in obedience to God and his Son, and live the life of good works which such beliefs demands. Faith does not excuse us from all labor. Faith produces new life, new will, new motivation, which make it possible to do easily, naturally, and normally the works we were created to do in the beginning.

We invite all men to come to Christ, to have faith on his name, to accept his grace, to give obedience to his gospel laws and ordinances, and to join us in the good works of his kingdom. Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.