

SKY Correspondence Course

Lesson 7

Faith Expressed by Works

Lesson Text: James 2:1-7; 14-24

The book of James has been a continual problem for those who would have the New Testament discard God's law. James calls the Law of God "the royal law" in James 2:8. He quotes Leviticus 19:18: "[Y]ou shall love your neighbor as yourself," which is the epitome of the last six of the Ten Commandments (Romans 13:9-10). James continues to teach that if you break one point of the law—any one of the Ten Commandments—you are guilty of all (James 2:10-11). God's law is at the same time the "law of liberty" (James 2:12). His law is the "law of liberty" because it frees man from the bondage of sin. This does not mean to say that man is free to do as he pleases (1 Peter 2:16).

In Lesson 6, we learned about being a doer, which means giving and serving. In this lesson, our attention is directed to the necessity of good works. We are to be committed to our faith. Just agreeing with doctrine and knowing biblical facts does not make you a Christian. When you do good works, it is the product of your faith. Your life will change because of how you demonstrate your faith (James 2:18). Your "faith" is worthless if you do not demonstrate it by your works (James 2:14-17).

Showing Favoritism and Partiality

Read James 2:1—What does "partiality" mean? It means to show favoritism for one over another. Have you ever wanted to be friends with people just because of the way they dress or where they live? Maybe you wanted to be friends with that individual over someone that doesn't have nice clothes or live in a fancy house. Does status, wealth, or fame impress

you? God is no respecter of persons; He shows no partiality (Acts 10:34-35).

Read James 2:2-4—The assembly means those Christians who are gathered together, such as in church. Why would it be wrong to favor someone for his wealth? The wealth a person has could mean he has worked hard, is intelligent, and made wise decisions. It could also mean he was just born into a wealthy family. Or worse, maybe he achieved his wealth dishonestly. If you give favor or respect to someone just because they have nice "things," you are putting more importance in his dress rather than in his character. This is wrong. If we are followers of Jesus Christ, we must not show favoritism. We must love all people regardless of their appearance.

Difference Between the Rich and Poor

Read James 2:5-7—Rich people tend to have trouble overcoming pride. Poor people tend to have trouble overcoming bitterness. God does not measure the amount of money a person has in their bank account as a measure of their faith or as a measure of what they have to offer. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29. In verse 6, James points out that many times it is the rich that are the oppressors. "Drag you before the judgment seat" refers to a poor person being thrown in jail or sold into slavery because they cannot pay their debts. Keep in mind, however, that not all rich people are oppressors. There are rich people who give generously. The "noble name" is Jesus Christ. As a Christian and follower of Christ, you carry that "noble name" by your example. Just because someone is rich, it does not mean they have the right to insult the poor. Between verses 5 and 7, James asks four questions: (1) Has not God chosen the

poor of this world to be heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? (2) Do not the rich oppress? (3) Isn't it the rich who drag you into the courts? (4) Are the rich not the ones who slander the noble name of Jesus? James definitely makes his point: to favor the rich and oppress the poor is wrong.

Faith Compared to Works

Read James 2:14—We return to the theme of lesson 6. We need to do more than just hear; we need to do. Faith is more than just intellectually believing in God. If your faith is not producing works, then it is not a saving faith. We have learned that you cannot have love and be a respecter of persons. By the same token, just because you have faith that does not mean you don't have to demonstrate it. Doing good works is an expression of true faith.

Read James 2:15-16—After reading this exaggerated example is there any doubt in your mind as to the answer? The answer is obvious, isn't it? James does this so that there is no doubt in our mind what we should be doing.

Read James 2:17—We cannot earn our way into God's kingdom with our works. Our works show our commitment to obey God. Our works are not substitutes for Christ.

The Evidence of True Faith

James 2:18-19—If faith was only believing, how would we know someone possessed faith? We wouldn't know, would we? Only a person's actions can show us whether he or she has faith. A word of caution: Don't begin to think that the only thing that is important is to busy ourselves with Christian activity. Do not neglect prayer and Bible study. It is also important that we do not sit around and judge what others do, or begin to think that only our works are true expressions of Christian faith. James continues to say that even the devils have an intellectual belief in God. This belief does not lead them to salvation, however.

Read James 2:20—The conclusion that James draws home is obvious. Even a self-centered, misdirected, vain, and empty man knows "that faith without works is dead." When you have a genuine faith, it will be obvious by its accompanying works.

Read James 2:21-24—Abraham is considered the father of the faithful. Abraham showed his faith when he showed his willingness to offer his son Isaac on the altar. This action justified the fact that Abraham had faith. We could see his faith by his actions. Faith and works go hand in hand. James concludes with the fact that a Christian cannot be saved by a dead and lifeless faith. We are saved by a faith that produces a Christlike attitude of love and a God-fearing holy life given to generosity.

True freedom comes only under a perfect law. Human government recognizes that freedom requires regulations so that one individual's freedom does not encroach upon the freedom of his fellow citizens. There are limits to freedom in order for freedom to exist; the greatest enslaver is anarchy which is lawlessness. Perfect freedom comes from the perfect law of God, which is the law of love. When perfect love is expressed, perfect freedom exists. The law, therefore, is a summary of what constitutes love and how it is to be expressed.

If you do not breathe, your body is dead. Likewise, if you do not do good works, your faith is dead. Love all your brothers and sisters. Do not show favoritism for one over the other. Love all of the members of God's family.

A verse worthy to remember:

"Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead"

(James 2:17).

Word Definitions

These definitions were taken from
Webster's New World Dictionary

- *Partiality*—Favoring one person, faction, etc. more than another
- *Blaspheme*—To speak evil of; to speak profanely of; to curse
- *Oppress*—Worry, to keep down by the cruel or unjust use of authority

SKY

Lesson 7

Correspondence Course

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State/Province: _____

Zip/Postal Code: _____

Country: _____

Questions and Answers

1. James calls the law of God the...
 - A. the royal law.
 - B. the difficult law.
 - C. the royal pain.
2. The royal law James spoke of is found in...
 - A. James 1:8
 - B. James 8:2
 - C. James 2:8
3. True/False—If you break one point of the law, you are guilty of all. _____
4. Who's law is the "law of liberty"?
 - A. James
 - B. Satan
 - C. God
5. Finish the sentence. The law of liberty...
 - A. allows man to do what he feels is right.
 - B. frees man from the bondage of sin.
 - C. gives you the opportunity to visit New York with no charge.
6. True/False—Knowing biblical facts makes you a good Christian. _____
7. What is a product of your faith?
 - A. Works
 - B. Attitude
 - C. Faith
8. When you show partiality, you are a...
 - A. good person.
 - B. respecter of persons.
 - C. pleasing Christian.

9. Where in the Bible does Peter say, "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality."

- A. James 2:10
- B. Acts 10:34
- C. Acts 34:10

10. True/False—God is concerned with the wealth of a person. _____

11. When we are Christians, who's noble name do we carry?

- A. James
- B. Jesus Christ
- C. John the Baptist

12. True/False—Faith is just intellectually believing in God. _____

13. "Saving faith" is...

- A. a faith that has excuses for not doing right.
- B. a faith that produces good works.
- C. a faith that allows you to be a respecter of persons.

14. Should we evaluate a person by the way he or she looks? Explain:

15. If a famous person came to your church, would it be right to give him favor over others? Explain

16. Give two examples of excuses we may give for not helping others? (2 points)

17. If you used any one of the excuses above, would you be showing a Christlike attitude? (2 points)

18. True/False—We can earn our way into the Kingdom of God with our works. _____

19. True/False—When you have a genuine faith, it will be obvious by its accompanying works. _____

20. Give three examples of how you can help in your community.

Answers

Lesson 7- Faith Expressed by Works

1. A
2. C
3. T
4. C
5. B
6. F
7. A
8. B
9. B
10. F
11. B
12. F
13. B
14. No, we should not because fine clothing tells you nothing about a person's character.
15. No, because fame does not make a person better than others. You should not put one brother over another.
16. I am too busy to help or you never help me, why should I help you, or my taxes pay to do that.
17. No because those are self-centered excuses. Jesus wants us to serve those in need.
18. F
19. T
20. Continue to visit the elderly at the convalescent hospital, make quilts for sick babies, provide food and clothing for the needy, etc.