

## Want to Know More?

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- Bible-based Articles
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[www.jonesroadchurch.org](http://www.jonesroadchurch.org)

## Please Join us for Worship

Sundays

9:30am - Bible Study

10:20am & 5pm - Worship

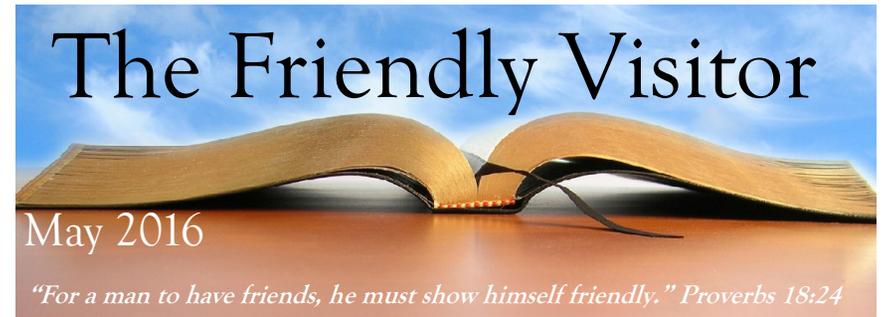
Wednesdays

7pm - Bible Study

## Jones Road Church of Christ

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"It is written." "It is written again." "For it is written." Those are not the words of a first-century Pharisee or a twenty-first-century "legalist," but the responses of Jesus when Satan came to Him in the wilderness. Each time the devil presented Him with a challenge, our Lord answered with a reply from Scripture (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10) and why should it be any different today? Please don't let anyone persuade you that looking to the word of God for your guidance and authority is legalism, for basing our lives and actions on what "is written" is merely walking in the steps of Jesus. "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6).



## A Working Faith

John R. Gibson

*“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?... Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.... But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?... Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?... You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” James 2:14-26*

*“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Heb. 11:6*

In some previous editions of *The Friendly Visitor* we have sought to establish the necessity of baptism (see the July 2015 and March 2016 editions which are available on our website) and we believe James 2:14-26, with its lengthy denunciation of a dead faith unaccompanied by works, shows the error of arguing that justification can be achieved without obedience (Heb. 5:8-9), but in this article we want to go in a different direction. While the principles found in this text demonstrate the error of seeking to ascribe one's initial salvation to faith only (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; et al), we need to appreciate that James was writing to believers who had once exercised a working faith in their initial obedi-

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ence to the gospel. His focus was not a rejection of the essentiality of baptism, though that certainly violates the teachings of James 2 and other New Testament passages, but he was concerned that disciples of our Lord were, to borrow a modern expression, simply talking the talk and not walking the walk.

James tells us an active faith will...

- ◇ **Rejoice in trials** (1:2-3, 12). True faith does not become angry, discouraged, embittered, etc. when various trials and temptations come our way. Instead, a working faith seeks from God the wisdom necessary to deal with whatever happens and will focus on the crown of life to be received at the end of life's journey.
- ◇ **Listen without becoming angry** (1:19-20). While these verses could easily apply to our dealings with others, the context points to our attitude toward God's word. Far too often we approach the Bible with our minds already made up, but we need to be listeners with sufficient faith or trust to accept whatever God's word demands of us.
- ◇ **Reject filthiness and wickedness** (1:21). Do our words, actions, entertainment choices, etc. reflect this kind of faith that works?
- ◇ **Receive with meekness the word of God** (1:21). While this article is intended to emphasize putting our faith into practice, there cannot be a genuine faith without a knowledge of the word (Rom. 10:17). Saving faith must begin with listening to God's directions—not simply doing the things we might think to be good works.
- ◇ **Be a doer** (1:22-24). It begins with listening, but true faith knows it must put into practice everything that is learned from God.
- ◇ **Bridle the tongue** (1:26; 3:2-12). An obedient, working faith knows one cannot use the same tongue to praise God and attack others without rendering his religion useless.
- ◇ **Learn to treat everyone equally** (2:1-10). If we are truly trusting in the Lord of glory, we will learn not to treat others differently because of economics, social status, race, ethnicity, education, or any of the other things that so often create divisions. Instead of partiality, those whose faith in the Lord is a working one will practice the royal law and love their neighbor as themselves.
- ◇ **Not be focused on selfish pleasures** (4:1-4). A strong trust in God will know that some pleasures are sinful in and of themselves (e.g. Galatians 5:19-21) and will abstain from them. But it also learns that those who walk in the footsteps of the One who prayed "Not My will, but Yours," do not always insist upon things being done

their way. An active faith is not constantly focused inward and controlled by self, but looks outward and upward in order to serve both God and others.

- ◇ **Live every day to glory of God** (4:13-17). While faith does not require morbidity, it does live each day with the realization life is short and the good we are to do must be done now.
- ◇ **Treat employees fairly** (5:1-6). A working faith will extend to every aspect of one's life, including one's line of work.
- ◇ **Persevere through times of suffering** (5:7-11). True faith does not expect an exemption from suffering, but is able to see the merciful and compassionate ending intended by the Lord.
- ◇ **Look to God in good times and bad** (5:13-15). The faith of Abraham will not forget God in times of prosperity and in times of suffering it will not become angry, but will instead look to God in prayer.
- ◇ **Be honest about one's sins** (5:16). True faith knows that it is foolish to try to hide that which cannot be hidden.
- ◇ **Pray earnestly** (5:16-18). While the child of God cannot always know what the outcome will be, his faith assures him God hears and is desirous of blessing His children.
- ◇ **Seek the restoration of the erring** (5:19, 20). It is a real tragedy when a disciple's faith weakens and he or she wanders from the truth, but those who truly believe the Lord's word concerning both reward and punishment of sinners will do all they can to restore the erring one.

It really doesn't matter if we are looking at coming to the Lord or continuing with the Lord, saving faith must be practical, not theoretical. *"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."* James 1:22

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**"Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?" James 2:22**