

Faith, Works, and Love



The Goal Is Love (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

A lot of people that I know, and I deal with a whole lot of people from different backgrounds, different denominations, different nationalities; I would say if they're saved they're saved by a stranger. Let me give you a little example. There you are in a river sinking for the third time. Somebody plunges in from the bank, rescues you, fishes you out, puts you wet and dripping as you are in the seat of his beautifully upholstered car, drives you off to his home, takes off your dripping clothes, gives you a new set of clothes to wear, takes care of your needs, then says, "From now on, let's be friends. You know where I live, here's my phone number, you can phone me any time you like. Come see me." That person never goes back to the one who saved him from drowning. I would say saved by a stranger, saved but you never come to know the person who saved you.

He who does not love does not know God. You may not know a lot of Scripture, you may have a lot of religious theory, you may be a member of a church, but if you don't love you don't know God—and you're much the poorer for it. Because, if there's one person who is really worthwhile getting to know, it's God.

Now let's turn for a moment to the connection between faith and works. We'll turn to the epistle of James. Some people think there was a conflict between James and Paul. I don't, I think they just stated two opposite aspects of the same truth.

Before I was saved I was a professional philosopher and my subject was logic. I'd like to say just a word of personal testimony. The most logical book I have ever read is the Bible. The most logical book in the Bible is the epistle to the Romans. Their logic is absolutely flawless. There are no inconsistencies. They are correct all through.

Let's look at James 2:26.

> "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

So, what James is saying is you can say you have faith but if it doesn't express itself in what you do it's a dead faith. You can say to somebody, "Be warmed and fed, have a good time," but if you don't sacrifice and give them what they need it's just empty words. What James is saying is merely

professing faith is not enough. He doesn't say it's wrong, he says it's insufficient. It has to be worked out by the things you do, what is called in the Bible works.

How is faith expressed in works? What is the Biblical way to express our faith in works? There is one Scripture, let's go back to Galatians, one of my favorite epistles. Galatians 5:6. Let me say this, if you've never been shocked by what you've read in the Bible, you've never read the Bible, because it is a shocking book. And, it's most shocking for religious people. I think it was Mark Twain who said, "It isn't the Scriptures that I don't understand that trouble me, it's the one I do understand." Galatians 5:6:

> "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything but faith working through love."

How does faith work? Through love. I didn't hear you. Through love. Thank you.

So when we have faith but it doesn't work through love, what kind of faith do we have? A dead faith. Faith without works is dead. Faith works through love. Therefore, faith without love is dead. Would you dare to say that after me?

> "Faith without love is dead."

Now turn and say it to your neighbor on the right or the left.

> "Faith without love is dead."

You've said a very significant and far-reaching statement. You don't know what you've put your foot in because what it means is you may have the most meticulously accurate doctrinal faith, dot every "i" and cross every "t," and yet your faith may be totally dead if it isn't expressed in love.

The problem is, I think and this is merely my personal observation, the majority of church activity in this nation today isn't even aimed at producing love. It's aimed at establishing certain doctrinal truths or commenting on the political situation or the situation in the Middle East, but there's no real...

I've said this many times to people. If you aim at nothing you can be sure you'll hit it. I don't want to seem critical but I am British, I mean, I grew up in this nation, I was christened, confirmed. And, you may be surprised to know, Ruth and I attend an Anglican church every week in Jerusalem, and we love it. I was a rebel against the Anglican church for many years, I said a lot of unkind things about them, from experience. They were not untrue but they were unkind. I think God wouldn't let me finish my life's career without putting it right with the Anglican church. Today all my complaints are laid down; all my criticisms, I no longer bother to make them. It is so easy to criticize the church, it doesn't require any cleverness. But to change a church, that is a task.

So, faith without love is dead.

Let me give you just a little bit, for the Pentecostals, the Charismatics, people like myself who speak in tongues and believe in spiritual gifts. I never knew there was a way to be a Christian without speaking in tongues because when I got saved I spoke in tongues. It took me a long while to discover there was any other kind of Christian. So believe me, if there's anybody here who believes in speaking in tongues and spiritual gifts, I'm one of them.

But listen to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:1–3:

> "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels..."

That's startling. Has it ever occurred to you that you may not be speaking in a human tongue but in the tongue of angels? When I was in the deserts of North Africa, after I had met the Lord, I had no Christian fellowship. I had to have fellowship with the Lord and I used to pray many, many time in tongues. I observed that I used one tongue which had "s" sounds in it and I've often wondered whether that was an angelic tongue. I don't know but at least it's perfectly possible according to scripture to talk not merely in the tongues of men but also of angels.

Paul says even if I do that:

> "...and have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."

I'm just an empty noise without love. Somebody said is it possible to misuse the gifts of the Holy Spirit? The answer is definitely yes. Any use without love is a misuse.

And then Paul goes on:

> "Although I have the gift of prophecy [now that's very popular today], and understand all mysteries and all knowledge [I have the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge], and though I have all faith [which is another thing that is very popular today], so that I could

> remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

It's easy for us to think of other people to whom that might apply but why don't we see if it applies to us.

And then he goes on to say:

> "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing."

I thought about that. There are some ministers who've profited others but it has not profited them. You can help other people but be unhelped yourself without love.

And then in the next chapter, chapter 14, Paul says:

> "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts..."

So Paul is not against spiritual gifts but he says get your priorities right. Priority number one is not spiritual gifts, it's love. I think whoever translated the New Testament recently, J.B. Philips, he translates this "make love your aim." I think that's a good translation. Make love your aim. Will you do that? Will you make love your aim? If you do you'll leave here different from when you came. I want to make love my aim.

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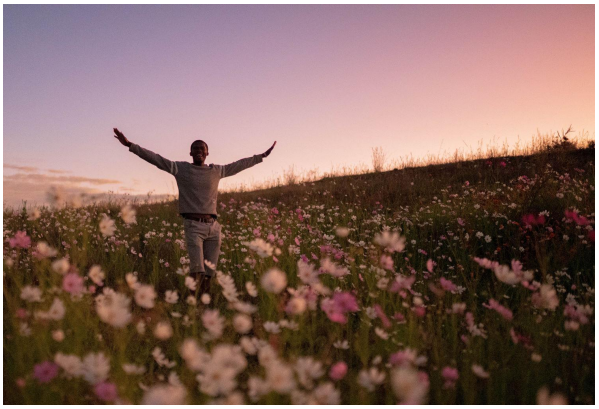

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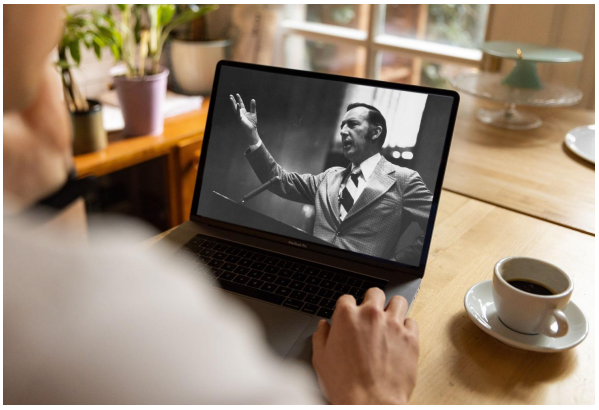

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