

THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS MESSENGER

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“And Abraham Believed God...” (2)

By Greg Litmer

The gentleman who prompted this discussion continued in his misuse of Romans 4, by looking at verses 4 and 5, among others. Those verses say, **“Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.”** His assertion was that, if Abraham had to do anything, then he wasn't justified by faith. The problem here, among several, is that he equates saving faith with belief alone, and they are not the same. Abraham was justified without the works of the Law of Moses, or the works of any man-made law, but he was most definitely justified by works. Whose works? The works that God told him to do.

In James 2, Abraham is used to demonstrate the exact opposite of what this false teacher to whom I was listening was attempting to convince people to believe. In James 2:21-24, we find, **“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, and he was called the friend of God.’”** What kind of works was James writing about? Was he writing concerning works of the Law of Moses? No. Was he writing about works that man comes up with in an attempt to earn his salvation? No. He was writing about works of obedience to the commands of God. He was writing about doing what God says, not just believing God, but obeying His will.

Now let's get back to the letter to the Romans. That wonderfully profound letter practically begins and ends with a phrase that is the key to understanding the letter itself. The phrase acts as “bookends” to the wonderful library of magnificent truths taught within the pages of the letter. It is found in Romans 1:5 and in Romans 16:26. Romans 1:5 reads, **“Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the *obedience of faith* among all the Gentiles, for His names sake.”** Romans 16:26 says, **“But now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to *obedience of faith*.”** Without obedience, there is no saving faith!

In Romans 6:3-7, we have that wonderful teaching about baptism being a burial into the death of Christ as well as a resurrection when we come out of the water to walk in

newness of life. In verses 16-18 we read: **“Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”** When were the Romans “freed from sin”? When they “became obedient from the heart” to that form of teaching.

The emphasis on obedience in Romans is all encompassing. In 2:6-8 we find, **“Who will render to every man according to his deeds; to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.”** In Romans 15:18 we read, **“For I will not presume to speak anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed.”**

Without obedience there is no saving faith. Faith without obedience is simply belief, and belief alone is not good enough. **“You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder”** (James 2:19).

| In Need of Prayers | Information |
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| <p>Taylor Osterling is home and currently stable.</p> <p>Lilly Fitzwater’s new room number is 32.</p> <p>Michelle Oxendine (friend of Jim Edwards) is dealing with some health problems.</p> <p>David Day (Bobbie Atkisson’s grandson) has been deployed to Iraq. His wife will follow this month.</p> <p>Brother Cecil Ellis was never able to recover from his health problems. He passed away Thursday afternoon.</p> <p>Remember Ron Catchen, Chuck McDavitt, and David Blakeman.</p> | <p>Brother Noli Villamor has sent an update with a request. He is seeking to start a new work. I have posted his e-mail back on his folder.</p> <p>The men will meet at 4 p.m. Please make your plans to attend.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University Height Church of Christ 445 Columbia Avenue Lexington, Ky 40508 859-255-6257 www.uheightschurch.com</p> |