

Reading: Joshua 2:1-21

“If faith is not translated into action, by itself, it is dead” (Js 2:17)

“Not any good deed but faith alone saves,” advocates Paul (Eph 2:8,9). But James declares, “Faith without deeds is dead” (Js 2:17). For a casual reader, these statements seem to contradict each other. But it is not so. Here is an example—

“By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies with peace, was not killed with those who were disobedient” (Heb 11:31). Eventhough the Epistle of Hebrews was written 2000 years after Rahab’s birth, she is still called a prostitute. Her life had been so dark. Nevertheless, she was saved by her faith. When two Israelite spies came to Jericho, she hid them under stalks of flax spread on the roof of her house and saved them from their enemies. Obeying the words of the spies, she tied a red rope on a window (Josh 2:21). Certainly her sin was red like crimson. But the slender scarlet string — her simple faith on the Blood of Christ — saved her and her family. Isn’t the faith of this non-Jew astonishing? She had the privilege of begetting Boaz the great grandfather of King David. She finds a place in the list of the soldiers of faith in Hebrews 11. Many who were better folks than her failed to enjoy this privilege. Here lies the glory of simple faith!

Apostle James argues, “Was not even Rahab, the prostitute, considered righteous for her good deeds of lodging the spies and sending them off in a different direction?” (Js 2:25). Did Rahab trust the Lord only after her encounter with the spies? No, she had possessed faith even before that: “Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof and said to them, I know that the Lord has given this land to you... the Lord your God is God in Heaven above and on the earth below” (Josh 2:8,9,11). What an unshakable faith she had on Jehovah! Yes, her faith in the Lord was already firm. It was as a manifestation of her faith that she accepted the spies, hid and saved them.

We conclude that what Apostle James emphasizes is not deeds to merit God’s favour but deeds seen in our lives as an outcome of God’s goodness shown to us. Good deeds are not a condition for salvation but an evidence. We are saved not *by* works but *for* works! (Eph 2:8-10).

*Not the labour of my hands can fulfil Thy Law’s demands;
Could my zeal no respite know, Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone!*

(Augustus M. Toplady, 1740-1778)

Almighty God, I worship You as a Father of love and compassion. Thank You for bringing me into this world with a purpose. I thank You for my affectionate parents who have been taking care of me so well. Thank You for my siblings and all the plentiful provisions at home. I have three meals and tasty snacks daily whereas there are millions dying of starvation. Thank You for the comfortable house and plenty of dresses whereas there are homeless and clotheless millions. You have given me all these blessings even though I deserve none of them.

Sorry, Lord, I failed to please You in my ways but went astray, disregarding Your love. I saw what I'm not supposed to see; I went where I'm not supposed to go; I touched what I'm not supposed to touch; I joined bad friends and spoke what I'm not supposed to speak. I wasted my life and spoilt my health. I became a headache to my loving parents. My life began to stink and I started hating my life. I got lost in loneliness and depression. Nothing satisfied me.

Thank You, O God, for the Gospel message that fell on my ears. Thank You for making me realize that Jesus died for my sins. I realized that I could not save myself. Only the blood of Jesus could cleanse me from all my sin.

Thank You, Father, for Your outstretched hands which embraced me as I was with the stink of sin. Thank You for Your affectionate kiss. How much You love me! Thank You for replacing my filthy rags with the robe of righteousness of Jesus. Thank You for putting the ring of full rights in my finger so I can be called Your child, and I can call You, Abba, Father! Thank You for giving me new sandals to walk with You and work for You, carrying the Gospel of Peace. Thank You for richly feeding me on Your table with the fatness and sweetness of Your holy Word. Thank You for the joy of Salvation that's flooding my soul. Thank You for turning my mourning into dancing. I cannot thank You enough for what all You have done to me as unworthy as I am. Your grace is amazing. Your provisions are abounding. Your revelations are astounding.

I pray, O God, for those who have not entered Your house yet. Help me, Lord, to bring them in to join Your banquet. Let them know that the pleasures of the world are nothing compared to the jubilation in Your fellowship. In the Name of Jesus Your Son and my Saviour, Amen!

(This prayer is based on the Parable of the Lost Son, Lk 15:11-32, Christ's longest Parable.)

(Lk 14:23; 15:11-32; Isa 53:6; 64:6; 1 Jn 1:7; Rom 8:15,16; Eph 6:15; Psa 30:11; 51:12; 116:12-14)