



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Faith, Works, and Eternity (James 2:8-26)

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The ultimate quest in life is to have lived in peace with God and with your neighbor. How are you tracking your progress during these years that remain in your time here on earth?

INTRODUCTION

It would be irrational for a college teacher to assign your course grade based solely on a final exam score. We expect periodic feedback, correction, and evaluation against known standards. James cites the source of standards as the royal law (James 2:8). America's Bill of Rights refers to this as natural law or the Law's of Nature and of Nature's God. Their source is the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17). Jesus summed up the first four as relationship with God and the second six as relationship with others.

LIFE'S EXIT EXAM

Matthew 22:40-36 *“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”¹*

You might question if there is a contradiction between works and faith. We gain access to heaven by faith in Jesus' payment of our sin debt! ***For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law*** (Romans 3:28). *Can we explain a lack of fruit?*

RECEIVING A PARDON ◦

Luke 23:39-43 *One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don't you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”²*

The pardoned thief did not do any good works apart from repenting of sin and trusting Jesus for mercy. The Sovereign Lord knew the man's heart was sincere. Consider the drama of being in a capital punishment situation and trusting the Governor or President for a pardon, even clemency! Jesus told of one who called Him Lord! Lord! And sought to enter heaven on that basis. The response was: ***“I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness”*** (Matthew 7:21). *What are your other options in a life exit strategy?*

WORKS – EVIDENCE OF A LIVING FAITH

James 2:17-18 *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.³*

Have you known of a person who seemed to believe in God but did not show mercy or compassion to others? You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder (James 2:19).

James gives the example of providing clothing and food for a brother or sister in need (James 2:14-16). *How did Jesus advise His followers to take care of those needing food or clothing* (Matthew 16:16; 19:21)?

The Book of Hebrews contains a litany of persons who demonstrated great faith. James reports two examples, Abraham and Rahab (James 2:23-25). *Can you recall a time when you or another acted on God's promise rather than follow the established course?*

A PRAYER

Lord, Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me (Psalm 51:9-12).

¹ The Holy Bible, New International Version (Biblica, Inc.) 2011

² Ibid

³ Ibid