



Living Faith: Sitting in that Chair

By Brother Scott

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I would like to speak today about faith. St. Paul defines faith in his letter to the **Hebrews** in **Chapter 11, Verse 1** he says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Some versions may read the "substance of things hoped for", but both are words that describe something tangible, something certain. And the word hope *Webster's Dictionary* defines as: to desire with expectation of fulfillment.

But, how can we be assured or certain of something we desire or expect to be fulfilled? There are many examples that come to mind, but there is one that stood out to me that will simplify things a little. The chair you are sitting in. Before you sat down in that chair, you had faith that the chair would hold you. Now if you had never sat in a chair before, you might would be a little more skeptical. You may still have believed that the chair would hold you, which is your desired expectation. But the belief alone, or the faith alone provides no assurance or certainty. You cannot be assured or certain or have any tangible or substantial fulfillment of your desired expectation until you sit in that chair. The act of sitting in the chair provides the assurance, the evidence that the chair will hold you. This is "the assurance of things hoped for"; this my brothers is faith. Faith is action!!!

In the **Epistle of James, Chapter 2, Verse 14**, St. James asks, "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him?" These are hard-hitting questions he asks. Then he gives us examples in **Verses 15 & 16**, "If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving the things needed for the body, what does it profit?" Then in **Verse 17**, he says it plainly, "So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." Now we have a clear distinction between a living faith and a dead faith.

In **Verse 18**, St. James says, "But some of you will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." This is exactly how I feel!

Let's go back to the chair for a minute. The dead faith is believing that the chair will hold you. It is dead because it cannot grow. It stops right there. Imagine if you never sat in that chair. You believe the chair will hold you, you have faith that the chair will hold you, you tell everybody you see, "I have faith that this chair will hold me." What good would that do? That, my brothers, is a faith that cannot grow, it's unfruitful, it's barren, it's useless! That is a dead faith!!!

Living faith, however, requires action. Living faith is sitting in that chair. Now, the first time sitting in that chair, having never sat in a chair before, would be difficult for anyone. But, after taking that first leap of faith, and finally sitting in that chair, you see that it becomes easier, and easier, until finally you sit down without doubt, in complete and total assurance, without even thinking about it. Your faith would grow!!! That, my brothers, is a faith that evolves, it produces fruit, it is not barren, it is useful, it's alive!!! This is a living faith!

St. James continues to stress the importance of faith and works going hand-in-hand. In **Verse 20**, he says, "Do you want to be shown, you foolish fellow, that faith apart from works is barren?" Now he proves his point by the example of our forefather Abraham. **Verses 21-23**, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see [that] his faith was

active along with his works, and faith was completed by works." (Completed ... his faith was completed by works, suggesting without works it is incomplete!) ... Let's keep going! He continues ... "and the scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, and he was called a friend of God.'" Now the next verse is controversial, and I will attempt to explain it the best that I can, so just bare with me. St. James says in **Verse 24**, "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone." A man is justified by works? The reason that this is so controversial is because it almost sounds contradictory to some of St. Paul's doctrine.

In **Romans, Chapter 3, Verse 28**, St. Paul plainly says, "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law." So now we have St. James telling us "a man is justified by works," and we have St. Paul telling us "a man is justified by faith apart from works." And both give Abraham as their example. So who is right, St. James or St. Paul? **Both** !!! And this is how.

We all by nature are very opinionated. When we form an opinion, we often see, hear, and understand what coincides with that opinion. When this happens, we miss some really important facts because we become closed minded. This very same thing happened to the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Don't let this happen to you. Always try to keep an open mind and an open heart, because without it our spiritual minds become darkened, and we resort to our own way of thinking.

In order to understand what both men are saying in these verses, you have to read the entire verse of both. St. James does say "a man is justified by works," but the rest of the verse says "and not by faith alone." This implies not just faith, but faith and works. St. Paul does say "a man is justified by faith apart from works," but the rest of the verse says "of the law." This is true! In **Romans, Chapter 3 Verse 20**, St. Paul says "For no human being will be justified in His sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."

You see St. Paul is talking about works that condemn, works of the flesh, works of the law. But St. James is talking about works of faith, works of the spirit, works of righteousness, faith in action. The difference between them is that the works of the flesh lead to sin and death, while the works of the spirit lead to life and righteousness!

St. Paul is right because there is not one thing we can do in and of ourselves that can save us from death! "Our righteousness is as filthy rags."

St James is right because our belief alone cannot save us. "The demons also believe and tremble with fear."

So what do we do? We believe, we confess, we repent, we humble ourselves, we trust in the Lord our God, we submit, and we surrender!!! This is faith in action! This is what all the righteous examples given by St. Paul and St. James did. This is what we are supposed to do!

St. Paul tells us in **Hebrews, Chapter 10, Verses 22-25**, "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

AMEN.