

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



John 8:32 and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

February

14

2021

DOING THE WORKS OF GOD

by Jim Stauffer

As we attempt to understand just what the Scripture teaches us concerning faith, we appeal to the Scripture. The accusation has often been made that some men believe in merited salvation because they reject the doctrine of “faith only salvation”. The Scriptures paint a completely different picture, however.

Let us look at what Jesus had to say concerning faith. *“Therefore they said to Him, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”* (John 6:28–29)

Jesus then says we must work the works of God by having faith. We know faith is necessary by this statement from the writer of Hebrews, *“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”* (Hebrews 11:6) First, Jesus says faith is the work of God and the book of Hebrews says that work of God is necessary to please God. Further the passage many turn to as a proof text that faith alone will save is **Eph. 2:8,9** which reads, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* So far then, we understand one is saved when he works the work of God which is faith. When he does that God sends His grace as a merciful act to save him because He loves His creation so (John 3:16; Eph. 2:4,5).

The final point to be made is by the brother of the Lord in the book of James. First, he illustrates this point clearly in the following verses, *“What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has*

no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?” (James 2:14–20) He then offers Abraham as an example of such faith and works when he took his only son Isaac to offer as a sacrifice to God in obedience to God’s command. He concludes this point with **verse 26**, *“For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”*

The faith God commands and demands is an active faith that leads one to obey His commands (**Heb. 5:8,9**).

The Bible has removed any and all questions about what faith really is and what it means. All that remains for us as His servants is to listen to Him and tune out the ideas and concepts of men. Are you willing?

GO AND SIN NO MORE

“When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more” (John 8:9-11 **NASV**). Debates continue about **John 8:1-11**—whether this passage really belongs in the Gospel of John, or if it even belongs in NT manuscripts at all (your Bible might have an asterisk referring to the debate). Most scholars have reached the conclusion that this passage was inserted later by a copyist; some think the passage may

continued on page 2

better fit somewhere in **Luke 23**. Did the passage even come from John? Continued arguments will not settle the question to everyone's satisfaction. Raymond Brown, renowned scholar in John's writings said: "There is nothing in the story itself or its language that would forbid us to think of it as an early story concerning Jesus" (Anchor Bible, *The Gospel According to John* I-XII, 335. With that, we continue.

Jesus is teaching in the temple; this ensured that great crowds were on hand to hear Him. The Jewish leaders continued to seek ways to trap Jesus; in this case, they bring a concrete example of a lawbreaker—a woman who had been taken in adultery. Their main concern was not the woman or her violation of the law; their main interest was Jesus' reaction to this woman; how would He apply the Law of Moses to the situation? Should the woman be stoned as the Jews said? Moses' law spoke about this issue; however, Moses also included the man who was involved (**Deuteronomy 22:22**). If either of these people were married, then adultery became the violation of the Law. Should capital punishment be meted out? And, where was the man who was party to this sin?

While the scribes and Pharisees seek to trap Jesus, He sets a trap for them. Jesus was already suspect in the eyes of the Jews—He (as they said) had little respect for the Sabbath; and He was extremely popular at this point in John's gospel. The compassion of Jesus for the downtrodden meant that the authorities needed to tread lightly.

We do not know what Jesus wrote in the ground; why speculate? Imagine, though, as tension and drama unfolds. His words "*He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her*" must have stung the ears of the woman's captors. But were their hearts stung? Witnesses to such an act were obligated to take part in the actual stoning of the guilty. Were they true witnesses; or, were they pawns in the hands of the religious elite? Was Jesus' handling of the situation true to the Law of Moses? Yes! He gave the go ahead for the stoning as long as the facts and application of the case were on high moral ground. Otherwise, shut up and go home. And they did.

What about the woman? Did Jesus condone her actions? No! But He did act with compassion, and justice, and hope. In the absence of proof, she should not be stoned. So, go, and sin no more. Leave behind the sins of your life. I love you and I will forgive you. And I will soon die for you.

Randy Harshbarger

Shepherds and Sheep

It's interesting to me that one of the prominent ways God defined leadership was through shepherding. Moses' leadership of Israel was likened to that of a shepherd (**Ps. 77:20**). God chose the young David to shepherd Israel just as he did sheep (**Ps. 78:71; 2 Sam. 5:2**). The elders of a local congregation are told to "*shepherd the church*" (**Acts 20:28**).

Shepherds care for the sheep. The main role, function, the primary responsibility of shepherds is sheep. Caring for the sheep. Feeding the sheep. Leading the sheep. Protecting the sheep. It's all about the sheep. Any other role or responsibility, whether if it's buildings or budgets, plans or meetings, must be seen as secondary to their primary objective – sheep. In the words of **Acts 6:2**, there are more important things they cannot neglect for the sake of the lesser important things.

Hebrews 13:17 gives the reminder that the role of these shepherds is to "*keep watch over the souls*" in their congregation. Understanding this ought to change the way we look at this role. It ought to change what dominates the focus of elders meetings or agendas. What good is a new parking lot if the members who park there are struggling spiritually? What good is a freshly painted building if those who worship there are drifting, hurting, in great need and the shepherds remain unaware?

Here are three responsibilities shepherds have towards their sheep:

1. Shepherds Set the Example (1 Peter 5:3)

Peter teaches that the shepherd leads by example. It's not pointing from the sidelines and giving orders. Rather it is leading the way – showing how the work is to be done by demonstrating that work. The way to help a congregation get engaged is not merely by asking them, or telling them, but by showing them. It's not leading merely by words, but by action.

Does the congregation need to grow in their hospitality? What would work more, having to order the group to do so, or the elders having people in their homes, leading the way by doing so themselves? What about evangelism? What would greater spark an interest in the church of being involved sharing the gospel – being told over and over again that they need to do so, or if the shepherds were seen active in this area – inviting others to services, leading Bible studies in homes, etc.

The church will follow your example, so give them an excellent example to follow.

2. Shepherds Know the Sheep (Proverbs 27:23)

There's an old quote that said about elders, "they smell like sheep." Someone only smells like sheep by spending a lot of time around the sheep. That's the role of the shepherd. You are to know your flock. Christ, our good Shepherd knows His sheep (**John 10:3, 14, 27**).

What does it mean to know the sheep? I'd venture to say it's more than their name, their occupation, their hobbies and favorite sports teams. That's the beginning. What about:

- How's their walk with the Lord? Are they growing? Are they struggling? Are they drifting? Do they need some help? Are they discouraged? Are they going through some hardship? Are they in a spiritual rut? Are they zealous? Has the spiritual fire gone out?
- How is their family? How is their marriage? How are their children and their relationship with God?
- What talents do they have? What are some of their strengths? Are they being used well?
- Are there some areas of their walk with God where they are weaker? Are there areas they would like some help improving?

This shows us you cannot learn all of this information through our few moments together after services. To be a shepherd is to be involved and invested in the lives of the people. Listen to that Proverb again – "*know well the condition of your flocks.*" Are they hungry? Are they eating enough? Are they eating the right food? Are they sick? Are they injured? Are they wandering? Are they lost? Would I know?

To know the sheep the shepherd must offer his time – the one thing we just never seem to have enough of. Yet the one thing that is crucial to this role is time spent with people. How special is it to see the shepherds taking an active interest in the souls of the congregation – when a shepherd takes you out to lunch just to see how you're doing and if they can help today. Or when a shepherd comes to a young persons' game or recital. Or when you're at the hospital for a loved one, and out in the waiting room are the shepherds and their wives. Do you know your sheep?

3. Shepherds Lead the Sheep (Psalm 23)

The shepherd psalm teaches us a lot about shepherding and leadership. One thing to notice is how the emphasis is put on leading. He took the sheep to the green pastures (v. 2), he leads them beside the quiet waters (v. 2), he leads them in the paths of righteousness (v. 3). He is taking them somewhere.

Shepherds lead the sheep. Leading implies a goal in mind – a destination, a direction, a goal. This shepherd is taking the sheep to a place of nourishment (green pastures), to a place they can be refreshed and quench

their thirst (still waters), to a place where they could grow and mature (paths of righteousness).

Where are shepherds of a local church to lead their sheep? Of course the ultimate goal is heaven, home with God, but what about greater spiritual growth? What about helping each soul mature, to become more like Jesus and increase and abound in their service in Christ's Kingdom?

It's asking questions like, "In 5 years, where will this church be? Closer to the Lord? Experiencing growth numerically? Growth spiritually? Adding more shepherds and deacons?" The more important question is, "Since, as a shepherd, I know these people, where should they be in 5 years? Growing? Learning? Improving? Overcoming certain struggles?" And once you ask those questions, you follow up with, "What will we do to achieve it?" Will it take special Bible classes or studies? Maybe some one on one time with some members who are facing hardships and struggles? Maybe giving some members more responsibilities to prepare them for future roles of leading and serving in the future?

The shepherd of **Psalm 23** didn't happen upon the place of rest. He didn't stumble upon the still waters. He didn't come to the paths of righteousness by accident. He led them there. In the hymn, "Heavenly Love Abiding," one verse says, "He knows the way He's taking, and I will walk with Him." Do you know where you are leading the sheep entrusted to your care?

God knew what He was doing when He gave these roles of leadership in a local congregation. When shepherds lead and care for the sheep, and when sheep listen and follow their shepherds, great things take place. Souls are strengthened. Sheep remain safe. We grow and learn. And God is glorified.

***By Jordan Shouse; Focus Online
jordanleeshouse@gmail.com;***

THE WORD OF GOD

For feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the Word of God,
Nought else is worth believing

I'll trust in God's unchanging Word
Till soul and body sever;
For, though all things shall pass away,
His Word shall stand forever.

anon.

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

We conduct in home Bible Studies

We offer Correspondence Courses

Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer

Elders:

Ron Peck and Jim Stauffer

Deacons:

Bill Miller

Brandon Jamison

Joe Hurd

OUR ADDRESS IS:

7845 Cottonwood Dr.

Lenexa, Kansas 66216

913-620-0563

Check out the following websites:

facebook.com/LenexaChurchofChrist

lenexachurchofchrist.org

News and Notes:

Alma Baumgartner, Jan Patrick, Trudy Mullen, Denese Goring, Brooklyn Boyer and Merry Dee Wood.

Tracy Richardson now recuperates at home Pat Gaines; Surgery improved issues in his spine. He now will attempt to recuperate and see what his capability is.

L.A. Stauffer has returned to the hospital

Sunday Morning Bible Class - Messianic Pathway - OT to NT - Jim Stauffer

Wednesday Evening Bible Class - Home and Family - Ron Peck

Sunday Morning Sermon - How Should I Respond to the Gospel



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10