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by Derek Melton

James 2:19 (TLB)

19 Are there still some among you who hold that "only believing" is enough? Believing in one God? Well, remember that the demons believe this too-so strongly that they tremble in terror!

In the seventh chapter of Matthew Jesus prophetically identifies a certain people that stand before His judgment seat with a crippled faith that prohibits them from entering into an inheritance incorruptible. Yes, a people that believe in God but with an inadequate belief inasmuch that our Lord Himself denounces them as unbelievers and workers of iniquity.

What could have happened to these seemingly religious folks who had performed many good works in the name of the Lord, cast out devils, and prophesied, that would invoke such fiery judgment against them? I believe that the answer to this critical question lies in the fact that their faith in God was nothing more than a mere acknowledgment of His existence and not the required faith that transcends the ordinary and transforms the heart and character.

It was this very line of thought that the Apostle James was illuminating; that true faith truly transforms. We are living in a very perilous time theologically. By this I mean our modern society is embracing a hollow theology that suggests believing in God is an adequate means to secure salvation. The evidence proving this wide-spread epidemic of theological dysfunction is the way modern Christians are living their lives.

Their intellectual acknowledgement of God has produced no change of heart and nature and therefore their actions and lifestyles are consistent therein. They continue in their abusive, self-centered world as they attend weekly services giving mental assent to the messages illuminating the God that they believe exists.

The danger of this religious intellectualism is that its deficiencies in converting the soul are rarely identified and corrected until it is too late. Jesus lamented this in His address stating: "Many will say unto me in that day; Lord, Lord - but I will say to them depart from me." It is altogether possible to have an accurate theological faith and be no better off than the devil. Beloved, the devil's belief in God is theologically accurate but he is none the better for it!

His lack is in regenerative faith or faith that produces inner change. Beloved reader, justifying faith is much more than something we confess, speak forth, or believe exists. Faith is the way we respond in a moral situation. It was by faith that Noah built an ark. It was by faith that Abraham went unto a land that he knew not. It was by faith that Moses refused to be called Pharaoh's son. It was by faith that Moses chose to suffer affliction with God's people. Therefore justifying faith is not in our acknowledgement alone but in our response in a given moral situation.

If our faith in God doesn't produce a corresponding change in nature thereby producing actions consistent with moral requirements then we are grossly lacking in any redemptive experience. Translating these terms from theological to practical would suggest that if our faith or belief in God does not produce in our lives obedience to Him and conformity to His righteous standards of Truth, we should not deceive ourselves into thinking we are born-again. Faith without works is indeed dead. Its religious worth has become extinct.

How can this redemptive faith be attained? Beloved, the first step is genuine repentance, which is produced by godly sorrow - or inner anxiety and grief over our unbelief and wicked works. The writer of Hebrews identified this important axiom when he spoke of a foundation of repentance from dead works, and faith toward God. It is consistent with scriptural truth that genuine faith is preceded by genuine repentance.

In fact, it is an impossibility to reach upwards in regenerative faith until we have bowed downward in acute repentance. This is the great lack of modern Christianity. We have become too poised to stoop so very low in contrition. Our generation is too self-conscious to affiliate itself with such voluntary humiliation. This is to our shame in the eyes of God but concurrent with that which is spoken: there shall be many in that day!

It is my belief that the reason our Christianity doesn't soar any higher than it does is because we have not humbled ourselves any lower than we have. Self-abasement is in need of a conscious resurrection in our generation. Who will dare to bow first?